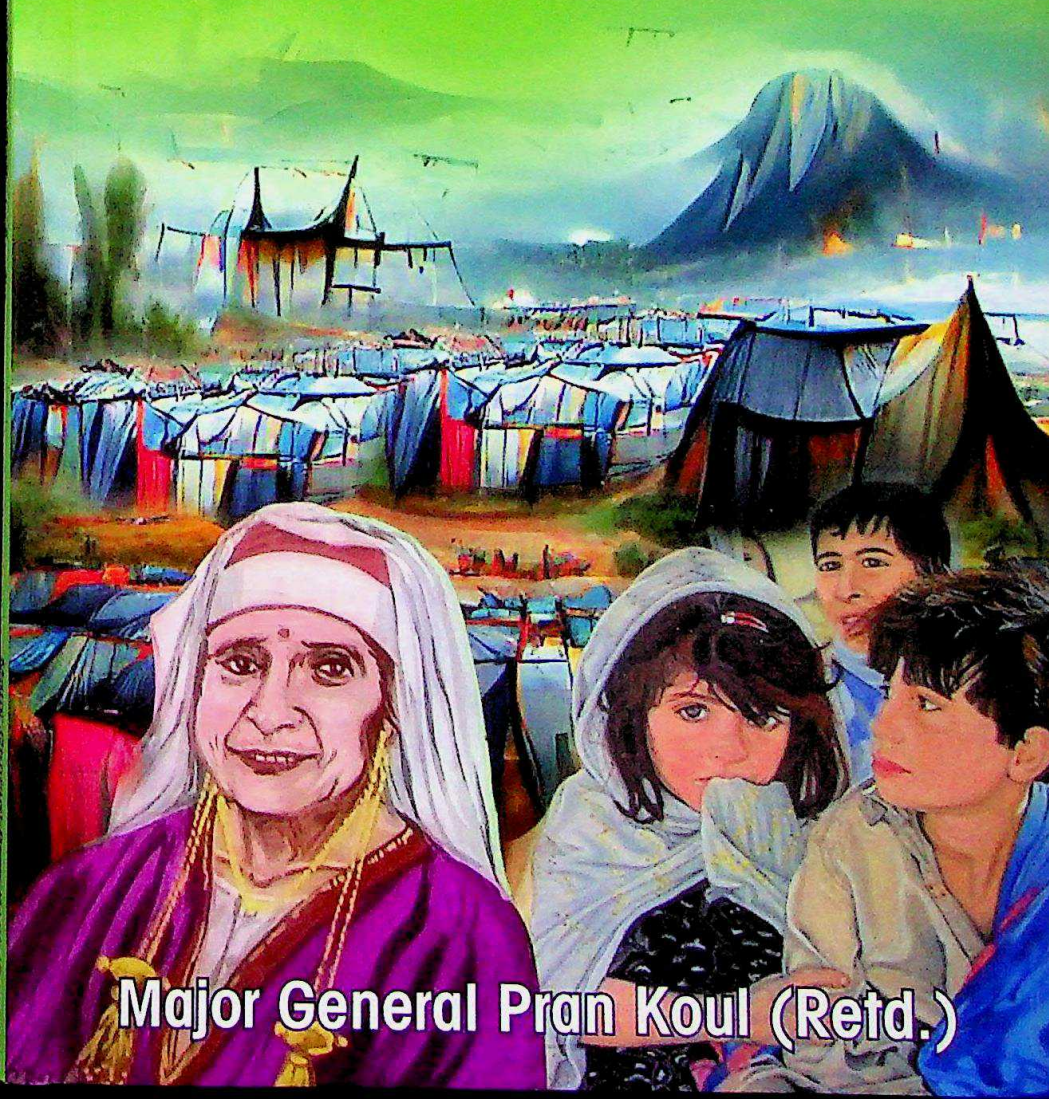




Turning Pages

Genesis of Kashmiri Hindu Exodus

(Glimpses of Conversation
Between a Mother & Her Daughter)



Major General Pran Koul (Retd.)



Turning **PAGES**

(Genesis of Kashmiri Hindu Exodus)

Glimpses of Conversation between a Mother and her Daughter

J.M. College of Education
Raipur, Pantalah
Jammu.

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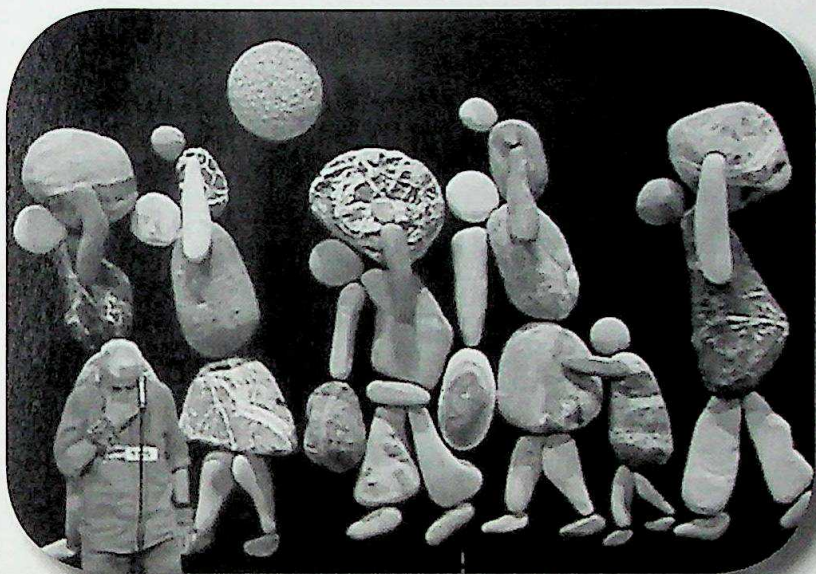
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Refugees in their Own Country-Nay-in-their-Own State

(*Image Source: Anonymous)

REMEMBERING

My brother-in-law



SH. A. K. RAINA

(Chemical Engineer turned Civil Servant)
FORMER DEPUTY DIRECTOR, FOOD & CIVIL SUPPLIES,
J & K STATE

He was shot dead in his Office Chamber
on 20th Mar' 1990,
in Srinagar (Kashmir)

Acknowledgement

I believe that it is challenging to create a book all by ourselves. Authors are close observers and generally have a natural support system which in totality enables them to cultivate a mix of observations and experiences within the environment that surrounds them. The experiences may be good or bad or both. Authors attempt to project these observations and experiences, to the best of their ability, within the pages of their books.

‘Turning Pages’ came into form as a consequence of an accidental bugle which someone sounded during a casual conversation. The book stimulates an interesting conversation, on a sensitive issue, between a young mother and her school-going, daughter.

Dealing with a sensitive topic like ‘Turning Pages’, warranted reference to various books, articles, interviews and lectures mainly to gather and project accurate and realistic information within the pages of this book ensuring that truth isn’t suppressed at any stage. I sincerely acknowledge reference to books, articles and interviews by Sh. Jagmohan, Sh. S. N. Dhar, Prof K. L. Bhan, Smt. Kalyani Shankar (News X) and Prof (Dr.) Satish Ganjoo amongst others. I thank Namya Press for their helpful attitude, Sh. Rajesh in particular.

I thank Navin, Rishi, Smriti and my wife Kunti for their support and encouragement. I also thank Smriti for editing the contents of the book and for her valuable suggestions. Well-deserved thanks to Fozia Khan (Tulip) for the cartoon illustrations, Shazia Zahid for the cover design and Amandeep Singh for book designing. I also thank Aftab, my four-year-old grandson, who kept me awake with his frequent knocks, during the creation of this book, probably warranting my attention.

Last but not least I thank Dr. Esha Kaul for consenting to write the ‘Foreword’ and the encouragement that she provided from time to time which has contributed substantially to the creation of this book.

Foreword

For

The Person

Who is the reason behind this book

&

*The Kashmiri Children of 1990 Exodus
and their future generations...*

For

the person

who is the reason behind this book

&

The Kashmiri Children of 1990-2000

and their future generations...

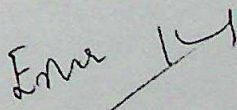
Foreword

I have had the pleasure of knowing Major General Pran Koul for over two years now. While we do share a doctor patient relationship, our common ancestry (in fact we share our last names as well) has given a unusual dimension to this equation. During his long hospitalizations, I came to know more about his extraordinary life, his credentials as multiply published author and his scholarship on India's geopolitical affairs.

During some of his meetings I shared with him my struggles as a Kashmiri child of the 80s... somewhat connected but somewhat disconnected from my roots, my history and my culture. Yet having a deep desire and a sense of responsibility to pass on whatever possible to the next generation... the Kashmiri children of the twenty first century.

I can't think of a person more suited to write this chronicle. His own determination to pass our language to his children while in the defence services, his deep scholarship of Kashmir, his prowess as an author and his newest role as a grandfather give him a perspective that would be hard to replicate.

My sincere thanks to him and his children in the tremendous effort put into this book. Kashmir is not just a place; it is our heritage... for all the children of Kashmir wherever they might be.



Dr. Esha Kaul,
Associate Director,
Hematology & Bone Marrow Transplant,
Max Health Care

Author's Note

While truth is buried underground, it grows,
It chokes; it gathers such an explosive force
That one day it bursts out, it blows everything with it.

—Emile Zola

Author's Note

It so happened that one day, a young lady friend of mine, who is like a daughter to me, suddenly started a serious conversation on what she called the 'Migration of Kashmiri Pandits'. I was aware that she had been a very young child when her family, like many other Kashmiri Hindu families, had also been forced out of Kashmir valley on the holocaust night of 19 January 1990. In consequence, her family underwent forced transplantation from their palatial house, in Srinagar, to a small tent of a few square feet, pitched in a deserted place in Jammu, with least amenities and surrounded by snakes and scorpions. Irrespective of being in a miserable state, her parents lapped her all along. They cajoled and kissed her and attempted every trick, under the sky, to bestow some relief upon the scared child every morning, day and night. Despite all odds, her parents put everything, at their disposal, to bring her up as best as they could under the prevailing circumstances. They didn't leave any stone unturned in educating her and finally saw the day when she rose higher and higher and set an example for others. I personally hold her in high regard and am proud of her hard work and achievements!

The young lady, however, confided that she had not, till then, shared the pangs of what she called the 'Kashmiri Pandit Migration of 1990' with her daughter of about twelve years mainly because she thought that the child may get prejudiced at a young age. Moreover, she felt that sharing the real horrid stories with a youngster might leave an undesirable impact on her psychology.

However, she realised late that it was not fair to conceal facts from our children that too in the present age when everything is available on the internet at the press of a button. Strange but true that her daughter recently questioned her about the holocaust night of 19th January 1990 when Kashmiri Hindus had been subjected to unbelievable horror at the hands of the barbarians which included the religious fundamentalists and many politicians who have blood on their hands.

She impressed upon me to pen down a factual brief, mainly for the children, about the genesis of the tragedy. Her aim was that the present generation of children should know the facts in the most transparent way. She was emotional and said, "Truth cannot be hidden, and if hidden, it bounces back on the naked face, sooner or later, in a very clumsy way." Her version suddenly reminded me of a great Russian author of his time, Leo Tolstoy, and his short story titled 'God Sees Truth but Waits'. She was so sincere and emotional in her request that I got highly motivated to pen down a small brief which has now taken the form of a booklet. I don't know what happened to me that I took it as an order rather than a request!

I am from the dense streets of Sopore (Kashmir) which was known, in happier times, as the 'Apple Town of Kashmir' and nicknamed as 'Chota (small) London'... the town which is now notoriously known for its militant activities. I had the best moments of my childhood in my hometown not only at home but also in school, not only amongst Hindus but also Muslim neighbours whose love and affection contributed a lot to my childhood development and left its mark on my personality as I grew up.

Having said that, it is also pertinent to mention that I have experienced the sufferings of my family, friends and other relatives from close quarters when they were subjected to the pangs of the holocaust in 1989-1990 at a time when the religious fundamentalists spread their wild paws over the innocent Kashmiri Hindu men, women and children.

*To everything, there is a season.
A time to keep silent; and a time to speak*

—Jagmohan

I shall share some firsthand experiences, in this regard, as we go ahead. A sincere request to the children – please wear hearts of steel while you read through some of the subsequent pages and do it under parental guidance as far as possible.

At this stage let me mention that though I have attempted to pen down facts, however, some pieces of relevant information have been compiled from various articles, papers and books available on the subject. I have penned down this brief in my own style which necessarily may not be in accordance with the dictates of English literature.

Readers May Note

This booklet depicts an interesting conversation between a young lady (Sheen) of about thirty-five years and her twelve years young daughter (Wuzmel).

The lady was born in the late eighties in a suburban village around Srinagar. A moment fell from her timeline, on the dark midnight of 19th January 1990 when her family was forced out of the beautiful valley of Kashmir. That night, out of unknown fear, she cried her lungs out in the lap of her parents and escaped death while many others of her age were not so lucky.

Her family was rendered refugees in their own country, nay in their own state. Despite all odds, her parents brought her up and passed on to her - their only weapon - The Weapon of Education.

Eventually out of sheer merit and hard work, the lady did very well for herself. She acclaimed laurels in her profession and has set an example for others to follow.

PART - I

THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN WUZMEL AND SHEEN

[It is the month of April 2022 and a pretty Sunday morning. The spring season is at its prime. Everything around wears a casual but pleasant look except for a young Kashmiri girl of about twelve years (Wuzmel) who, as it appears, is in serious conversation with her mother (Sheen) in their house somewhere in Noida]

Wuzmel (the girl child): Ma, what does migration mean?

Sheen (the mother): why this sudden question, my child? You never asked it before?

Wuzmel: Today our teacher mentioned it in class. He talked about, what he called... let me recall the term he used... 'A few Recent Migrations that Our Mankind Witnessed'. It was very touching. All the students heard with swollen eyes and it became the talk of the class. Suddenly out of all the students the teacher asked me, "Wuzmel, being a Kashmiri, you may be having a fair idea about migration. Why don't you get up and apprise your classmates about it? Come here, you may use the highlighter and the whiteboard."

Wuzmel (adds): Ma, I felt very sorry because I didn't know about the topic to the extent that I could talk about it with confidence. I got myself excused. The teacher expressed surprise and asked me, "Have your parents not discussed this with you?" I told him frankly that they do mention it superficially at times but have never been deliberate about it or attempted to explain the details, may be for reasons better known to them. It was for the first time that I couldn't respond to a teacher's question in class and felt embarrassed.

Sheen: Go on my child.

Wuzmel: Ma, he also asked me if I knew Kashmiri, my mother tongue. I replied, "No" and he was surprised and advised all the students in the class that they should know their mother tongue. He added that it is very necessary to know one's roots. I felt very conscious because all my classmates started looking at me.



Sheen: It is not your fault dear and don't blame yourself for that. But I think that your teacher is absolutely right. It is very important to know our mother tongue and also our roots. Let me also accept that your teacher's words are not only a lesson for you but for me as well.

[Sheen, the mother, was taken aback – echoes of the past resonated deep within her and she started turning pages within her mind. Many happy and sad events and experiences reeled in front of her, which she was exposed to, in her childhood, in Kashmir... She did realise that it was necessary to educate her child not only about her roots but also acquaint her with some salient situations about which she had been kept ignorant so far. Being a Kashmiri Hindu – the tragedy of the '1990 Exodus' and its pangs stood tall in her mind for she had been one of the survivors that too when her life had just started blossoming as a proud child of the valley]

Sheen: Wuzmel, you deserve to know what you are asking for. I realise that I should share the details with you in a transparent way. It is a long story which I'll try to cover in various parts.

During this conversation, I feel that I should also touch upon the political environment in the valley that existed at the time of our independence in 1947 when J & K was under the rule of Maharaja Hari Singh. And I shall tell you what led to the subsequent accession of this princely state with India. You will understand that this has a direct/indirect impact on the theme of our conversation. However, I will address it at a later stage. Wuzmel, remind me if I forget to discuss this aspect with you.

Sheen (continues): Let me first give you a brief about our Kashmir valley which we Kashmiris generally refer to as 'Kasheer' and sometimes 'Mauj (mother) Kasheer'.

I will not speak about the details of ancient history but rather give you some highlights. You may take it further by referring to the relevant texts to dig into the details of your interest.

Then I will try to expose you to the rich Kashmiri culture of olden times and mention briefly some ancient Saints and Rishis who preached the brotherhood between various communities. I feel that this will give you a good understanding of the theme of our discussion.

Sheen: Is that OK or do you have any suggestions?

Wuzmel: That will be fine Ma.

[While Sheen was getting ready for the narration, she took a deep breath. She made Wuzmel sit at ease and started turning pages of her memory – pages which were not easy to revisit, let alone narrate...]



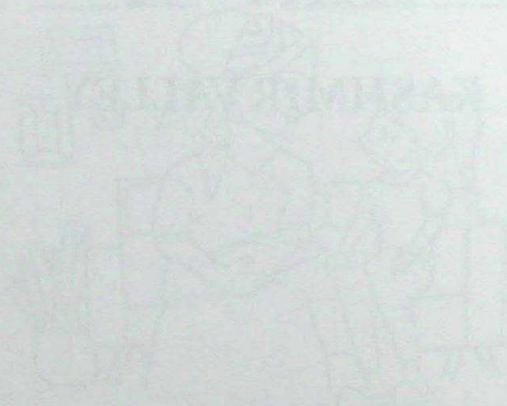
Sheen: As I said, I am not going to jump the gun by talking directly about what you asked for. Instead, it will be logical to acquaint you with the genesis of the problem. Do stop me whenever you want clarification or a break.

Wuzmel: Thanks Ma. Yes, that will be great! Please start first with 'Kashmir Valley'.

PART - II

KASHMIR VALLEY

PART II



Sheet. As I said, I am not going to jump the gun by telling
you about what you asked for. It will be better
to send you with the present of the product. I am not sure
you want clarification as a book.

Wanted: Please let me know what you want. Please let me
know. Thank you.

Sheen: The history of Kashmir is explained in '*Rajatarangni*', the historical book written in 1148 by 'Kalhana', a Sanskrit Kashmiri scholar. He mentions that Kashmir was formerly a huge lake surrounded by mountains. It was known as 'Sati-sar'. As per Hindu mythology, 'Rishi Kashyap', through his long prayers and meditation, succeeded in cutting the gap in the hills of the then 'Varaha-mulla' now known as Baramulla and still addressed as Varaha-mulla by the locals. As a result, the water of the lake drained off, leaving a big chunk of land behind. Subsequently, Aryan Saraswat Brahmins, who were originally living on the banks of Sarswati River, came to settle down over the land which had turned into a valley. As time passed, this collection of dwellings of the valley came to be known as 'Kashyapa-pura'. Over the years the name got distorted to Kashmir. It is worthwhile to note that *Cashmere* is the archaic spelling of Kashmir (commonly used in early times) and is still spelt like that in some countries. It is said that the Buddhist emperor Ashoka founded the capital city of Kashmir which was known as Shrinagari. The region thrived as the centre of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Dear Wuzmel, Kashmiri Brahmins, also known as Kashmiri Pandits, are a group of Kashmiri Hindus who have their lineage to the larger Saraswat Brahmin community of India which originally belongs to the Pancha Gauda Brahmin group. It is a community of Kashmiri-speaking Brahmins who are the original inhabitants of Kashmir. They have been living in the valley for generations and are distinctly identified by their dress, customs and traditions.

They say that in the first half of the 1st millennium Kashmir became an important centre of Hinduism and later Buddhism. It was in the ninth century that there was the rise of Shaivism which is a tradition, within Hinduism, with a theology that is predominantly related to the Hindu god Shiva. However, Kashmiri Shaivism started

declining during the 13th to 15th century due to the influence of Islamisation.

The first Muslim ruler of Kashmir, Shahmir, established his rule in 1339 and sowed the seeds of the Shahmir dynasty. The Muslim monarchs ruled Kashmir for the next five centuries which included the rule of the Mughal Empire from 1586 to 1751.

Most of the Islamic rulers showed utter discrimination towards Hindus which was against all ethics of Islam. They ruled over them with an iron hand except for kings like Zainul-Abdin and Akbar who were tolerant. Now let me tell you about Zain-ul-Abidin whose full name was Ghiyas-ud-Din- Zain- ul-Abidin. He was the eighth Sultan of Kashmir. He has been amongst very few rulers in Kashmir who ruled for about 50 years. He practiced religious freedom and took appreciable measures in promoting literature, art and architecture. His subjects, irrespective of the faith they practiced, treated him as a demigod. Unlike his predecessors and his descendants, he gave absolute religious freedom to his subjects. These were the prime reasons that people of all faiths called him by the name 'Badshah' which means Great King. He is also known as 'Akbar of Kashmir' because the Mughal Emperor Akbar was also a very tolerant king and gave Kashmiri Hindus a lot of freedom and dignity. I will tell you more as we go ahead. Wuzmel, remind me if I miss talking about him.

Generally, except for the period of Zainul-Abdin and Akbar, the Kashmiri Hindus were subjected to unbelievable cruelty and atrocities regime after regime, which led slowly to the multiple exodus of Kashmiri Pandits and various waves of their so-called migration from time to time.

Afghan Durrani Empire ruled till 1819 when it lost its control over Kashmir to the Sikh Empire in the Battle of Shopian and subsequently Sikhs, under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, annexed Kashmir. The Sikhs surrendered Kashmir to the British in lieu of indemnity imposed on the Lahore Darbar

Quoting Professor Satish Ganjoo, a well known historian, "The British made it over to Maharaja Gulab Singh on March 16, 1846, for a sum of seventy-five lakhs of rupees. Thus began the rule of Gulab Singh Dynasty (Dogra) in Kashmir. The creation of the Jammu and Kashmir State in 1846, through the Treaty of Amritsar, was a master-stroke of British diplomacy in Asia. No doubt, Kashmir never became a part of the British India domain, but the British authorities allowed only minimum operational freedom to the Dogra rulers. In fact, the British created a buffer State of Jammu and Kashmir under the title of a "Sovereign State" to keep Russia at a distance from British India and to counter the Czarist Russian "menace" in Central Asia."

Professor Ganjoo adds, "In the middle of the 19th century, the growing menace of Russian expansion in Central Asia posed a direct threat to the security of British domain in India. So there was need to create a buffer between the two rivals in Asia. Kashmir, like Afghanistan, served the purpose. Installation of a British Commissioner in Ladakh in 1847-48 was a prelude to the forceful perpetuation of British imperialist policy in Kashmir... In 1885, the first British Resident was appointed in Kashmir. With this started the active British intervention in Jammu and Kashmir State. Creation of Gilgit Agency, subjugation of Chitral, establishment of a Council and finally partial deposition of Maharaja Partap Singh in 1889 was the completion of British imperialist stranglehold over Kashmir. This was managed by the British through their successive residents in Kashmir."

The descendants of Maharaja Gulab Singh ruled thereafter under the tutelage of the British, till 1947. Their last ruler was Maharaja Hari Singh. As regards the current status, the former princely state of J & K, is a part of India, however, part of it, known as POK (Pakistan Occupied Kashmir) is under the occupation of Pakistan while Aksai Chin and Trans Karakoram Tract is occupied by the People's Republic of China.

Sheen: Do you have any questions, Wuzmel?

Wuzmel: No Ma, this is very informative.

Sheen: Good to hear that... Now let me tell you about some ancient Kashmiri 'Saints and Rishis' to give you some glimpse into salient shades of Kashmiri culture.



PART - III

ANCIENT KASHMIRI SAINTS, RISHIS AND SUFIS *(Salient Shades of Kashmiri Culture)*

PART III

ANCIENT KASHMIRI SAINTS
RISHIS AND SEPTIS
(2nd or 3rd c. A.D. to 10th c. A.D.)

Sheen: Listen carefully, my child: Kashmir valley has always been famous for its scenic beauty. It is also known for the type of its unique culture that bonded together various religions, rather cultures, which included Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. In medieval times, it was known as 'Rishi Bhumi', the holy land of 'Shiva and Parvati'. Thereafter with the advent of various other cultures in the world such as Islam and Buddhism, it underwent transformations. It experienced lots of ups and downs and despite the upheavals, it earned the name of 'Peer Veer', the land of Shaivite saints, Sufis and Peers because of which Kashmiris set an example of brotherhood the world over.

Sheen (continues): Wuzmel, I will tell you briefly about some of these saints else this chapter will run into volumes, but I advise you to refer to various books, papers and articles to know more, as you grow up. Knowing your interest in such topics, I think you'll enjoy reading about them.

Wuzmel: Ma, your advice is well taken. Please continue, I am pretty excited to hear!

Sheen: This led to the evolution of the unique culture of 'Kashmiriyat' which set in a wave of reformation within the varied religious and cultural ways of the life of the inhabitants. Seeing the present status of the communal environment in Kashmir, one can hardly believe that there was a time when this culture of Kashmiriyat had contributed to the well-being of Kashmiris to the extent that the cohesive bonds of brotherhood had become an example of uniformity in diversity for others to follow.

Sheen (adds): A very important point to note is that the fundamental base for this characteristic of brotherhood was laid by the religious preachers of various religions. They were instrumental in the development of cohesive bonds between the varied masses

and helped in formulating a solid cultural landscape of brotherhood. Let me narrate to you about some of these noble souls.

KALHANA

Kalhana was born in a Kashmiri Hindu family in the early 12th century. His birthplace is Parihaspore in Kashmir. His father's name was Chanpaka. He served as a minister to King Harsa of the Lohara dynasty.

Kalhana is known to be the greatest Sanskrit poet who wrote *Rajatarangni*, a book in the form of a long Sanskrit poem describing the history of Kashmir. He wrote *Rajatarangni* between 1148 and 1149. All information regarding his life has to be deduced from his own writing.

He used a variety of sources, such as inscriptions, documents, and eyewitness accounts, among others, to accomplish his writings. He was different from other writers for he was often critical of rulers and their policies. Kalhana is known as the first historian of India.

Kalhana was familiar with earlier epics such as the 'Vikramankadevacharita' of the Bihana, the 'Ramayana' and the 'Mahabharata'. Like many Hindus of his time, he was also sympathetic to Buddhism and Buddhists in turn are known to have reciprocated their feelings towards Hindus.

Even in relatively modern times, Buddha's birthday has been a notable event for Kashmiri Brahmins, and this has been there well before Kalhana's time. The fact is that Buddha had been accepted by Hindus as an avatar of Vishnu.

ADI SHANKARACHARYA

Adi Shankaracharya was born in a poor Brahmin family in Kalady (Kerala) in the 8th Century. His parents were Shivaguru and Aryamba. He lost his father when he was just seven years old. It was

his mother who played a key role in educating him in Vedas and Upanishads. He was attracted to the life of 'Sanyasi' right from his childhood but Aryamba, his mother, discouraged it.

However, she approved of him becoming a Sanyasi after realising his keen interest in Hindu scriptures and strong determination to achieve his aim. He read and understood the Upanishads, Bhagwad Gita and Brahmsutra at a very young age. He took the guidance of his Guru 'Gaudapadiya Karika' who was amazed to find that Shankara almost mastered all the scriptures in a short time. From the age of sixteen to thirty-two years, he travelled across the length and breadth of ancient India and apprised the masses about the life-giving messages of the Hindu scriptures. The problem back then was that Sanatan Dharma was reduced to a 'Ritualistic Religion' where general masses and other philosophers had misunderstood and consequently misinterpreted the core teachings of Hindu scriptures. This led to the widespread increase in, though peaceful, conversions of Hindus to Buddhism and Jainism.

On completion of his education, Shankara turned into a 'Guru Adi Shankaracharya'. He analysed broadly the fundamental reason for the ever-expanding influence of Buddhism and Jainism in India. He realised that the reason was in understanding and misinterpretation of the Hindu scriptures. Adi Shankara became an authority after cultivating unlimited knowledge and a superb understanding of the Hindu Scriptures. He challenged the Buddhist philosophers for 'Shastrarth', a philosophical and religious contest rather debate where the contestants must answer any question presented to them with the understanding of their core scriptures.

In Adi Shankaracharya's case, he had to answer questions based on his knowledge of Vedas, Upanishadas, Bhagwad Gita and Brahmasutra, whereas Buddhist philosophers had to answer according to the core teachings of Gautam Buddha. The questions could be either from the judge, the audience or other participants. Adi Shankaracharya's only condition for every Shastararth / debate was

that whoever wins the debate the other has to become his disciple. Rest all is history. Because of a true understanding of the Hindu scriptures, Adi Shankara convincingly defeated every philosopher he ever debated with. It is said that he authored thirty-five books.

The beauty is that his opponents would not feel dejected by their loss against him but rather felt happy that they had found a great teacher in the form of Adi Shankara and so did the followers of the defeated opponents. Adi Shankara made his opponents his disciples who along with the audience realised the true importance of Hindu Scripture. Adi Shankara travelled through the length and breadth of India. He founded four 'Mathas' (monasteries), one each in four cardinal points in India viz; Sringeri Sharada Peetham, Dvaraka Pitha, Jyotirmatha Peetham and Govardhana Matha.

Sringeri Sharada Peetham was the first monastery and is located in the southern part of India on the bank of the Tunga River. Dvaraka Pitha is located in the western part of India. Jyotirmatha Peetham is located in the northern part of India. Govardhana Matha is located at the eastern part of India and is part of the famous Jagannath Temple.

Sh. P. N. Magazine, a research scholar of repute, writes in 'Shankaracharya Temple and Hill' that Shankaracharya visited Kashmir with the intention of advancing Vedantic knowledge. That time Kashmiris were culturally and spiritually much advanced and believed strongly in the greatness of both Shiva and Shakti. Shankara did not, at that time, when he visited Kashmir, believe in Shakti cult. Quoting Sh. PN Magazine, "Shankaracharya with his party camped outside the city of Srinagar without any boarding and lodging arrangements. Seeing the plight of visitors, a girl was sent to meet Shankara. She found the party uneasy and frustrated because of not being able to cook as no fire was made available to them. The first glimpse of Shakti was exhibited to Shankara by this girl. In reply to the girl's question that despite being so great, he couldn't make

fire, Shankara expressed his inability to make a fire. The girl picked up two thin wooden sticks (samidhas) into her hand, recited some mantras and rubbed the sticks and fire was produced to the surprise of Shankara." Magazine further adds that later Shastrarth (religious discourse) was arranged between Shankara and a Kashmiri woman. This discourse continued for 17 days. Shankaracharya yielded before the lady in discussion and accepted the predominance of the Shakti cult (greatness of Devi).

According to Magazine, after accepting this predominance of Shakti cult, Shankara wrote 'Saundarya Lahari', in praise of Shakti, at the top of the hill, known till then as Gopadari Hill. He says that Saundarya Lahari is acclaimed as masterpiece in Sanskrit literature. After visiting Kashmir, he became a staunch believer in Shakti-Shri Chakra - the symbol of Devi (Goddess). A point to note is that a Saint of greater order, Adi Shankaracharya, gained further depth in spiritualism and mysticism in Kashmir. He was awarded a degree of the Sharda Peetha, the highest honour conferred on any dignitary of knowledge when he visited Sharda, the famous temple shrine of Goddess Saraswati and a famous university of learning of ancient India.

This temple is situated about 100 kilometres to the Southwest of Srinagar, which is now under the occupation of Pakistan. Kashmiri Pandits were not satisfied by this award to Shankaracharya and desired to honour him furthermore and dedicated the hill and temple where he wrote Sundarya Lahari to the memory of his visit to Kashmir. The hill, till that time known as Gopadri Hill and temple, are both, thereafter, known as Shankaracharya Hill and Shankaracharya Temple. 'Kashur Encyclopedia' published by J & K Academy records, "Behind Shiv Lingam at Gopadri (Shankaracharya temple) is Statue of Adi Shankaracharya, which has been installed in 1961, by Shankaracharya of Dwarka Peet.

Aditya Shankaracharya died at the young age of thirty-two years in Kedarnath located in the northern Indian state of Uttarakhand.

ABHINAVAGUPTA

Abhinavagupta was born in Kashmir in 950 AD. He was a great philosopher, a mystic (a person who believes in the spiritual apprehension of truths that are beyond the intellect) and an aesthetician (a person who is versed with aesthetics meaning a set of principles concerned with nature and appreciation of beauty). He was also considered an influential musician, poet, dramatist, exegete (a person who interprets text, especially scripture), theologian (the study of the nature of God and religious belief) and logician (an expert in or a student of logic), a polymath (a person of great and varied learning). He is known to have a multifaceted personality because of which he exercised a strong influence on Indian culture.

Abhinavagupta challenged earlier traditions of knowledge, redefined their conceptual dynamics and brought in his own radically new interpretations that remain at the core of India's intellectual history. He is widely acknowledged as the foremost exponent of the school of 'Kashmir Shaivism' in India. He was born into a family of distinguished scholars who were devout followers of the spiritual path. His parents were Narasimhagupta and Vimalakala. From an early age, he was trained in Sanskrit grammar, logic and literature. He chose a celibate life, and travelled widely, acquiring knowledge in different branches of learning including faiths such as Buddhism and Jainism apart from Shaivism to which he contributed significantly.

Abhinavagupta views the nature of reality from the perspective of philosophical thought in his three works, 'Bhagavadgitartha-samgraha', 'Isvara-pratyabhijnvimarshini' and 'Isvarapratyabhijna-

vivritti- vimarshini'. His contribution to the fields of aesthetics and literary theory are reflected in his monumental work 'Abhinavabharati' which is an explicit commentary on 'Bharata's Natyashastra', while 'Lochana' is a commentary on 'Anandavardhana's Dhvanyaloka'.

'Abhinavabharati' has provided both the basis and structure for the evolution of Indian poetics and art in general. In fact, 'Abhinavabharati' is the only available ancient commentary on 'Natyashastra of Bharatamuni'. It not only explains the whole text of 'Natyashastra' (a Sanskrit treatise on performing arts), but introduces novel ideas, re-examines the prevailing intellectual traditions and provides interpretations for the existing schools of thought.

The dialogic methodology employed in 'Abhinavabharati' gives Abhinavagupta ample scope to analyze, interpret and contest the viewpoints of his earlier commentators and establish his own theory unequivocally. He died in Kashmir in the year 1016.

LALLESHWARI (LAL DED)

The children need to know that 'Lalleshwari', popularly known as 'Lal Ded', has been one of the most eminent saints, poets and mystics that Kashmir has ever produced. Almost all Kashmiris consider her a holy woman, however, many thinkers consider her a poetess, many consider her a Sufi and many as yogi. And many people consider her a devotee of Shiva and even 'Avtar'.

It goes without saying that she has been recognized as a popular saint all along to the extent that every Kashmiri has Lal Ded's one saying or the other on the tip of his or her tongue. The influence of her personality on Kashmiris' psyche is so pronounced to the extent that Kashmiri Hindus and Muslims affectionately call her 'Mother Lalla'. She is also called 'Lallayogeshwari'. Some people call her Lalla, the mystic.

La Ded was born in a Kashmiri Hindu family and became a devotee of the Shiva family in 1355 at Pandrethan. They say that from her childhood she was very religious, and her personality exuded the traits of wisdom. She was married at the age of twelve years and named 'Padmavati'. Her in-laws were from Pampur, a place famous for saffron. It is said that her mother-in-law was very cruel, and her husband was also not kind to her but her father-in-law was very kind. Her mother-in-law would put a stone on Lala's plate and cover it with rice. As a result, she would remain half fed. But Lala never complained against her mother-in-law who made her life miserable.

Lal Ded became devotee of Shiva when she renounced the world at the age of twenty-six. She would go around naked and be in the company of Sadhus and saints and became a disciple of Sidh Srikanth. She claimed that she had not encountered any man but on seeing Shah Hamdan she then cried, "I saw a man, I saw a man." Her sayings, which number around two hundred, exude her deep knowledge in various aspects of life.

Her exact date of death is not known but she died in Bijbehara (Vejibor). Quoting Mr Kachroo (*Kashmiri Pandit Network*), "Why is Lalla so famous in Kashmir. She was illiterate but she was wise. Her sayings are full of wisdom. In these sayings she dealt with everything from life, yoga, dharma and atma. Her riddles are on the lips of every Kashmiri."

HABBA KHATOON

Habba Khatoon was born in 1579 in a Muslim family in the small village of Chandrahar in Pampur (District Pulwama), Kashmir. Her father's name was Abdi Rather and her mother's name was Janam. Her real name was Zoon (the Moon) which is still a common Kashmiri name. She was called Zoon because of being a paragon of beauty. She was from an ordinary peasant family but possessed an urge to learn right from her childhood because of which she learnt to read and write from the village 'moulvi' (Muslim Priest).

She is known to have been quite ascetic. She grew up in the midst of saffron fields in Pampur (Pampore) and under the shade of Chinar trees. Her parents married her at an early age to an illiterate peasant boy, Aziz Jan by name. He couldn't keep her happy because he didn't understand or appreciate her worth. As such, she was very sad.

Just like Lal Ded, she also had a sad life except for the fact that Lal Ded became desperate and renounced her home at the young age of twenty-six and Zoon divorced her husband. Zoon was fond of composing and singing Kashmiri sad songs under the shade of Chinar trees. She was gifted with a rich melodious voice to the extent that people titled her 'The Nightingale of Kashmir'.

It is said that one day Yusuf Shah Chak was on his mission of hunting, on a horseback and passed an area where Zoon was busy singing under a Chinar tree. As he went nearer to her, he was wonderstruck not only by her beauty but also by her melancholic melodious voice. As they kept on looking at each other, their eyes froze, and they fell in love at the very first sight. Yusuf Shah Chak finally married Zoon and she changed her name to Habba Khatoon.

Yusuf Shah Chak then became the King of Kashmir. They say that Habba Khatun introduced 'lol' to Kashmiri poetry. It may be understood that 'lol' is equivalent to the English 'lyric'. 'Lol' conveys one brief thought and is full of melody and love. It can be set to music and sung.

They say that Habba Khatoon kept Yusuf Shah under her control and both were living a happy life until the day Akbar arranged to call Yusuf Shah Chak to Delhi and arrested him. He was kept in a prison in Bihar. The poor Habba Khatoon got separated from Yusuf Chak. That is why her songs are full of sorrow and exude loneliness and separation.

Habba Khatoon spent her last days singing her sad songs of loss and separation. These songs are popular to this day to the extent that even now young Kashmiri singers, on public demand, turn to

her popular lyrics. One such song 'Harmukh Bartal...', is sung as a Kashmiri Bhajan by Kashmiri Pandits as Goddess Parvati's love song for Lord Shiva. It is sung as a love song by Kashmiri Muslims which gives an authentic glimpse of Kashmiriyat. This song is now known to many people because of its inclusion in the popular series 'The Family Man'.

Habba Khatoon died in 1609 at an age of about 55 years and was buried in Kashmir at a place called Athwajan.

RESHI PEER

Reshi peer has been a well-known saint of Kashmir of the 17th Century. He became a famous saint and was popularly called 'Pir Pandit Padshah Hardu Jahan Mushkil Asan' which means 'Emperor of Two Worlds and Answer to Difficulties of all Kinds'.

His father, Sh. Govind Kaul, hailed from Batayar Mohalla of Ali Kadal, Srinagar Kashmir. His father married a girl from Gushi village of Handwara Tehsil, located in the present Kupwara District. Thereafter his mother-in-law prayed at a holy spring to bless her daughter with a child. It is said that she heard a voice telling her to bring her daughter to the spring and smell the bunch of flowers floating in the spring. Reshi Peer's mother became pregnant. While the delivery was approaching she left her parent's house for her in-law's place (Ali Kadal, Srinagar) by boat and while on the way, at Sopore, gave birth to Reshi Peer.

To commemorate his birth a temple has been constructed which is known as 'Resh Sund Mandar' (Rishi's temple). He was named Keshav and was married at the age of seven. He started losing interest in worldly affairs and spent his life following saints and searching for a Guru. They say that thereafter he went all around the perimeter of 'Shri Sharika Bhagwati Shrine' on his knees for forty days which resulted in a divine message from goddess Sharika telling him to proceed and take blessing from the first man he meets for he would

be his Guru. That is how he encountered Mastana (Pandit Krishna Kar), his Guru, whom he found sitting on a big stone.

He continued his 'Sadhna' for a period of about 14 ½ years in his house in accordance with his mother's wish. He helped and blessed the people, Muslims and Hindus alike. He helped in taking them out of worldly difficulties and soon people started calling him 'Peer Pandit Padshah'. It is said that a message reached Aurungzeb who was annoyed at knowing that people were addressing him as 'Padshah' (King). They say that by his miraculous powers he reached Delhi overnight which made Aurungzeb tremble and got convinced about his spiritual powers and wrote to Saif Khan, Governor of Kashmir to cancel the arrest orders with an additional instruction to keep a 'Jagir' (property) in his name in Devsar village.

It is also said that Maula Ahmad Badkhshani, A contemporary of Reshi Peer, used to have discussions on spiritual matters with him and he influenced Mulla Ahmad with 'Vedantic' concepts to the extent that Dara Shikoh (Mulla Ahmad's pupil) translated the concepts in Persian and named the book 'Sair-i-Akbar'.

(Source: Koshur Samachar, a monthly magazine under the organ of Kashmiri Samiti, Delhi)

SWAMI PARMANAND

Pandit Nand Ram, Parmanand being his penname, was born in 1791 A.D. in Seer Village near Mattan (Martand), one of the famous holy places in northern India in Kashmir. His father was a 'Patwari', and his name was Krishna Pandit. His mother's name was Saraswati Devi. Both his parents were very religious. Nand Ram, right from his childhood, was a very good student and got his education, in his own village, in Persian, the court language of Kashmir those days. He learnt Sanskrit from the 'Sadhus' whom he used to visit and stay in Martand temple those days. His inborn knowledge about spiritual matters and dedicated learning skills impressed his teachers

and 'Gurus'. He mastered the language of Persian and Sanskrit. He wrote verses in Persian under the penname Gareeb.

Parmanand rose to enviable eminence not only as a saint but also as a poet articulating spiritual insights. Born in the family of a village Patwari he was named Nanda or Nanda Ram, and his persistent endeavour transformed him into "Parmanand (Supreme Bliss).

BHAGWAN GOPINATH

Bhagwanji was like a god in human form. This became unmistakably evident to the discerning among his devotees who found him ever-absorbed in the universal consciousness. He would come down to the plane of consciousness only when prompted to answer queries by the seekers and would then instantly return to his exalted state of divine bliss.

Bhagwan Gopinath was a mystic saint of 20 th century born in Kashmir. Born as Gopinath Bhan, the saint never stepped out of Kashmir and largely lived in a life of reclusion. Fondly called *Aghoreshwar* by his contemporaries, he was also referred to as *jivanmukta* and his spiritual state was described as the "Shambhavi avastha". His spiritual status is such in Kashmiri cultural history that it can be compared to philosophers like Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Shri Aurobindo.

RUPA BHAWANI

They say that Devi Rupa Bhawani was born in the first quarter of the 14th century which coincidentally coincided with the politico-religious change in Kashmir.

She had a great and deep experience of the ups and downs of life. The worldly sufferings showed her the path of spiritual life. Her spiritual 'Guru' was her father Pandit Madhav Joo Dhar who initiated her into the mysteries and practices of yoga.

With the taking over of Islamic rule over the centuries-old Hindu rule, Rupa Bhawani preserved the ancient cultural heritage of Kashmir through her teachings on the principles of Shaivism. Her poetry is a unique attempt to combine the essence of both Kashmiri Shaivism and Islamic Sufism.

UTPALADEVA

Utpaladeva was an Indian philosopher and theologian from Kashmir. He belonged to The Trika 'Shavia' tradition and has been the most important thinker of the 'Pratiyabhijna' school of monistic idealism. Very little is known in the annals of history about Utpaladeva. He was a Brahmin. He was the son of Udayakar and lived a married life in Nauhatta (Navyut).

He is regarded as a great mystic saint of Kashmir who lived around the middle of 900 AD. It is said that Utpaladeva's philosophical teachings were as profound as Adi Shankaracharya's. His poems were sung while being in deep devotion. These poems became the philosophical doctrines of Kashmir Shaivism known as the Trika system.

He was a major influence on Abhinavagupta whose works subsequently overshadowed Utpaladeva's concepts/works. He considered Shiva as the supreme reality. Isabelle Ratie (*a senior fellow of the 'Institut Universitaire de France' & professor of Sanskrit language at Sorbonne Nouvelle University*) says that he also provided an argument for the existence of God and argument states "... that the universe is an effect... consists of a specific arrangement that must have been created by an intelligent agent considered as its efficient cause". Utpaladeva believed that given the complexity and harmony of the universe this creator must be omnipresent and omnipotent.

RICHE DED

Riche Ded, an eminent poetess, seer and philosopher of Kashmir, lived through the twentieth century. She was shrouded in mystery.

Her real name was Saenpat Devi. It was only twelve years after her death that her literary compositions first saw the light of day. For a while, it seemed that the illustrious Lal Ded of the fourteenth century had taken yet another birth. She was born in Srinagar in 1880. She had tremendous yogic powers and blessed everybody irrespective of any caste and creed and lived saintly life till she passed away in 1966.

Riche Ded composed 450 delectable 'vaakhs', using the common man's language which is still in vogue in the valley. These 'vaakhs', compiled by a poet and family friend, Prithvi Nath Kaul 'Sayil', were published by her son, Hari Krishan 'Fani', in book form at the end of 1980, her birth centenary year. The number of 'vaakhs' was much higher (1,000 according to her son) but many of them were unfortunately lost to posterity due to reasons beyond human ingenuity.

Her husband, Janardhan Kaul 'Sagar', was also a poet in his own right. He was well versed in Urdu, Persian, Arabic and English, besides Hindi and Sanskrit, and translated several books into different languages while in the service of Nizam of Hyderabad. He died in 1918 when Riche Ded was only 38.

Riche Ded passed away, unsung and unwept, in 1966, at the ripe age of eighty-six.

SARADA DEVI

The Holy Mother, Shri Sarada Devi, symbolizes the ideal motherhood of women, ancient and modern. Her life is an enigma. On the surface, it appears to be just the homely life of a Bengali Brahmin lady, mostly in a rural setting. Yet her deportment discloses unmistakable marks of dignity and love of an order that may easily be called superhuman. In the galaxy of the greatest women of the world, the holy mother shines apart in as a beacon of luminosity.

Prof Jai Kishori Pandit, an English scholar says Sarada Devi married Ramakrishna at the very early age of five years... Sh. Ramakrishna's life was a boon to humanity. Sarada Devi focused all her mental and physical resources on preserving the precious life of Sh. Ramakrishna... Finding that, her niece Nalini blinded by the prejudice of untouchability, could not serve food to a Muslim Dacoit, Amjad, the holy mother volunteered to do it herself... to her eyes Amjad was as much her child as Swami Shardanand, a worthy monastic disciple of the master and her own devoted attendant. The holy mother was endowed with all the famine virtues which have been traditional good qualities of a human being.

SWAMI NAND BABH

Sh. J.N. Bhat Says that Swami Nandlal, who was endearingly called Nandabab, strode the spiritual scene of Kashmir for more than fifty years till he passed away on 30th October 1973. He was known for having the capability to perceive things or events in the future or beyond. He behaved like a man out of his wits, quaintly dressed and would be seen muttering incoherently which generally, to an ordinary man, made no sense. They say that his every word had deep meaning and meant a lot to those people who sought his blessings.

Who in Srinagar has not seen at one time or the other, a quick-walking, queer-looking nimble man with a big hat on his head and a tight belt round his waist, taking long strides in quick succession along the streets of the city and elsewhere?

He has been one of the great seers that the valley of Kashmir has produced so far. He hailed from a village called Nunar, Near Ganderbal. He was indifferent to diet and highly unpredictable. For him, all the people, from any part of the world were the same.

SWAMI NAND LAL JI

Swami Nand Lal Ji was a brahmachari and was incarnated with sainthood by his Holiness swami Lal Ji of Banaras. Swami Lal Ji, a great Yogi, was so much impressed with the deeds of his 'shishya' that at one point of time he would offer his 'aasana' to him which the latter would not accept as it was not right in the guru-shishya relationship.

Sh. S. K. Kaul says that Swami Nand Lal Ji was born in the year 1902 at Gurgari Mohalla, Zaina Kadal Srinagar to a well-to-do Kaul family, known as 'Kothdars'. His forefathers had been renowned bankers even to the extent that they were bankers to Maharaja Pratap Singh. They were ardent devotees of the goddess 'Jagadamba Sharika Devi'. Swami Nand Lal Ji's mother died when she was young, leaving behind her two sons and one daughter. Maybe it was the beginning of an orderly yatra for Swami Ji towards a spiritual goal. His first Guru was his spiritual mother whose ways of life directed the great saint of this century to adopt the godly way.

NUNDA RISHI

Sheikh Nur-ud-din, endearingly and in veneration called Nunda Rishi, has left an indelible mark on the thinking mindset and culture of all Kashmiris irrespective of the religion they followed. The great sage was one of the twin stars of medieval Kashmir along with Lalleshwari (Lal Ded) with whom he shared the intensity of mystic experience and whose profundity remains unrivalled to this day.

Quoting an extract from EFSAS (European Foundation for South Asian Studies): 'The origin of the Rishi order goes back to pre-Islamic times when during Vedic period, hermits renouncing the worldly pleasures retired to caves in forests and mountains to meditate subjecting themselves to severities. However, in Kashmir the *Muslim Rishi movement* was started by, Nuruddin Nurani (1377-1440), by moulding the pre-existing Rishi tradition for the spread of

Islam, using local institutions to make Islam more comprehensible to the people of Kashmir. The Hindu followers commonly remember him as *Nund-Rishi* or *Sahazanand* (The blissful one). Nund Rishi's teachings can be described as thoughtful critiquing the society and his loyalty was with the Kashmiri peasantry, the poor lot and his *Sbruks* (taken from the Sanskrit word *slokas*) that consistently attacked the caste system. He attached importance to yogic practice and breath control for communion with God. He preached a disciplined life like:

“Desire is like the knotted wood of the forest. It cannot be made into planks, beams or into cradles; He who cut and tilled it, will burn it into ashes”.

Nund Rishi's Ziyarat at Charri-Sharief, Badgam District Kashmir is the place he chose for the final repose of eternal rest.

SYED BULBUL SHAH

Quoting Ishfaq Tantry from '*Tribune News Service*' Chandigarh, “Syed Abdul Rehman popularly known as Hazrat Bulbul Shah, a saint of highest spiritual and Sufi order, travelled some 700 years ago from Turkistan and settled in Kashmir around 1324 AD, a time when Kashmir was ruled by a Buddhist ruler Rinchan Shah.”

Some people say that Hazrat Bulbul Shah, also known as Sayed Sharfuddin Abdur Rahman, arrived during the period of King Suhadeva (1301-20). But the majority of historians believe that he arrived in Kashmir when it was ruled by Rinchan Shah, the Buddhist King.

Khaid Hussain (*Source: Rising Kashmir of 6th July 2021*) says that Bulbul Shah was the first Islamic preacher to introduce Islam to the people of Kashmir. The ruler of Kashmir, Rinchan Shah converted to Islam at the hands of the saint Bulbul Shah and thus became the first Muslim king of Kashmir.

Syed Bulbul Shah has been one of the greatest Sufis of the highest spiritual order and was also known as the 'Bulbul-e-Kashmir' in Kashmir. The saint belonged to the Suharwadi order, strictly a Sunni Sufi order which was founded by the Sufi Diya al-din Abu 'n-Najib-Suhrawardi (1097 – 1168 CE). Bulbul Shah laid down the foundation of Sufi and secular culture in Kashmir around 1320 AD.

During his time, besides Islam two other religions Hinduism and Buddhism were popular in Kashmir. It is said that the Sufi saint propagated the synthesis of all three faiths and introduced the message of peace acceptable to all. As per records Bulbul Shah passed away in 1327 C.E. and was buried near a mosque which exists in his memory in Khanquah in Srinagar.

MIR SAYYED ALI HAMADANI

Popularly known as Shah-e-Hamadan, Mir Sayyed Ali Hamadani's teachings were based on the principles of *Tawheed* (oneness of God), '*Taqwa, Ikhlas*' (purity) and Unity. Unlike the saints of mainland of India, he showed his connection to both the Quran and Hindu-Buddhist thoughts thus promoting the universal language of love and preaching how people of different faiths could live peacefully together.

The contribution of Sayyed Ali Hamadani to Kashmiri society is immense. He not only brought a social revolution by preaching the tenets of Islamic social justice, fraternity, love, and equality but also wrote a political treatise *Zakhirat ul Muluk* for the guidance of kings about how to rule. He was also instrumental in an economic revolution by introducing new arts and crafts in Kashmir, which later formed the backbone of Kashmir's local industry.

Kashmir has been a place of shelter and meditation for the saints, Sufis, rishis and other devoted worshipers of God. These saints belonged to different religions like Shaivism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam which spread here after the arrival of the Sufis

from Central Asia. The important elements present in all these religions formed the making of the cultural and spiritual landscape of Kashmir.

(Source: Deccan Herald)

LAKSHMAN JOO

Lakshman Joo has been one of the most prominent personalities amongst Kashmiri Hindus who added to the recognition of the Kashmiri Hindu Community across the world in the tradition of 'Kashmir Shaivism'. There have been three important Geographical milestones in the journey of his life.

Firstly, the city of Srinagar where he was born in a Kashmiri Hindu Brahmin family. His father's name was Narayandas ('Navnarayan') Raina and Amyamali was his mother. He was the fifth child in the household and had four brothers and five sisters. They say that his father was the first person to have introduced the concept of houseboats in the Kashmir Valley.

The second important geographical milestone was the famous ashram of Sadhamalyun, a couple of kilometres from Kandi Khass village which in turn is about four Kilometers from Nathunusa, the road head on Sopore-Handwara Road, located in the present Kupwara District.

The Third geographical milestone was above the village of Gupt Ganga, near the Nishat suburb of Srinagar, popularly known as Swamiji's 'Ishbar Ashram'. This was a place where Abhinavagupta had lived nine centuries before. The fourth geographical milestone has been, Nishat, a few hundred meters from Nishat Garden.

At the age of five, he was introduced to the path of spirituality by his elder brother Maheshvaranath. At the age of 19, it is said, he experienced a clear taste of self-realisation. Shortly afterwards he left home and moved to the famous ashram of Sadhamalyun. From

1934 to 1935, Lakshman Joo moved to an isolated place above the village of Gupta Ganga near Nishat suburb of Srinagar where his parents built him a house, the famous 'Ishbar Ashram'. Thereafter he moved down the hill to Nashat.

Around the age of 30, Lakshman Joo travelled in India, spending time on a Mumbai beach and a short time with Mahatma Gandhi at Sevagram and then with Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry. From there he found his way to Tiruvannamalai to meet Ramana Maharshi where he stayed for a few weeks and later commented, "I felt those golden days were indeed divine".

They say that little was known about the Swami for almost three decades (1930-1960), as it was his habit to spend the winter months in silence and seclusion. Still, in the summer he had occasional visits from both scholars and saints. The Indian Spiritual Master Meher Baba visited his ashram in 1944. In 1948 Lilian Silburn from the National Centre for Scientific Research, Paris, visited the Swami. She would return regularly for the next ten years, during which time she studied the major texts of Kashmir Shaiva philosophy, all of which were published in French. Paul Reps, the American artist, author and poet stumbled upon the Ashram in 1957. With Swami Lakshman Joo he studied the ancient text of *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*, and later published the '112 Practices of Transcending' in the fourth chapter of his book 'Zen Flesh, Zen Bones'. This teaching also influenced Osho, and formed the basis of 'The Book of Secrets'.

It was a few years later, in 1965, after attending a Sanskrit conference in Varanasi, chaired by the renowned Sanskrit Tantra scholar Gopinath Kaviraj, that the word quickly spread that the tradition of Kashmir Shaivism was alive and well, and fully embodied in the person of Swami Lakshman Joo. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi visited the Swami each summer from 1966 to 1969. The two saints formed a lasting relationship. Baba Muktananda, of Siddha Yoga, also visited on two occasions. Until his death in 1991,

Swami Lakshman Joo freely taught, giving weekly lectures on the mystical and philosophical texts of Kashmir Shaivism. Many of these lectures were audio recorded by John Hughes and later published. Lakshman Joo's interpretation of Kashmir Shavism attracted the attention of both Indian and western Indologists. The Swami has correspondence with Professor Giuseppe Tucci of the University of Rome La Sapienza, and his regular visitors included scholars, such as Jaideva Singh, Professor Nilkanth Gurtoo, Acharya Rameshwar Jha, Jankinath Kaul, Raniero Gnoli, Alexis Sanderson and Mark Dyczkowski.

In 1991 Swami travelled to the United States and established the 'Universal Shaiva Fellowship' where he designated John Hughes and his wife Denise to continue publishing his teachings of Kashmir Shaivism. A number of written and audio records and DVDs on the life of the saint have been edited by John Hughes since Swami Ji's demise in 1991. In India the teachings of Lakshman Joo are carried on by Ishbar Ashram Trust, an organisation founded shortly after his death.

(Source: An Indian Tantric Tradition and it's Modern Global Revival by D. E Osto & various other International Publications)

MATHRA DEVI

Mathra Devi was born in the Kashmiri Hindu family of Pandit Hari Koul at Verinag in 1935. From her very childhood, Mathra, her pet family name, had great love and earnestness for the search for truth. She grew with all love for Godly things, God's name, and spiritual intimacy. She always demonstrated an unfamiliar and surprising attitude towards her home and the world around her.

She was married to Shri Bhagwan Dass Kandroo Bhagalal of Anantnag at the age of 14-15 years, but the marriage lasted about three years only when her husband passed away in his teens. Mathra

returned to her parental home at Verinag. Here she practised her spiritual sadhana and tapasya along with her younger and only brother, Pandit Gobind Koul, who was also, like his sister, inquisitive for God and Truth. It was at this stage that she met her spiritual Guru, Pandit Shridhar Joo Sharabi of Srinagar who guided his young disciple with all love, care and bhakti.'

It was after three years of 'Tapasya' on the bank of Vitasta (Jhelum River) that she emerged as Mathra Devi with her face blazing with divine fervour. She finally shifted to Srinagar. She made Shivalya temple, located at Chotta Bazar, her abode which finally turned into a spiritual centre due to the spiritual activities. It was from the Shivalaya complex at Srinagar that the Devi spread her spiritual message to thousands of devotees through her 'Upadeshas' and 'Vyakhyans' on topics like character building, social reforms, and the thirst for Truth. It was here that she grew her 'Jattas' (hair) like that of Lallishwari.

The centre shifted to Durganag, where the Devi would bless hundreds of devotees daily. It became another Ashram to which endless streams of people of all categories; women and children flocked daily to listen to the blessed and informed religious and spiritual discourses.

It was from Durganag that the Devi was taken back to Verinag in 1967 by her brother, Pandit Gobind Koul, his son, Pandit Prithvi Nath Koul, and her disciples. She remained there for seventeen years and passed on 5th January 1985.

Thousands of mourners, Hindus and Muslims alike joined the Devi's 'arthi' amidst sky-rending slogans of Mathra Devi Amar Hai, Mathra Devi ki Jai. The pyre was lit by Pandit Shamboo Nath Kandroo, the only survivor on her husband's side, as per tradition.

(Source: Samachar 'The Martand' January 25, 1985 issue)

PART - IV

EXODUS OF KASHMIRI PANDITS

(First Exodus to Fifth Exodus)

Sheen: Wuzmel, before I continue, it is important for you to know that the so-called 'Migration of 1990' (what I call the 'Exodus of 1990') is not the only exodus of Kashmiri Hindus. There have been several mass exoduses of Kashmiri Hindus spread over many centuries which I will tell you briefly else this narration will run into volumes. For the sake of ease and your understanding, I will talk about these exoduses, one by one.

Wuzmel: Thank you Ma.

THE FIRST MASS EXODUS

In 1339 Shamir, the first ruler of Kashmir became the architect of the Muslim rule in India and got Khutba and coins stuck to his name. He invited Muslim missionaries, preachers and sayeeds to the valley. They stayed under royal protection and freely propagated, what they called, the message of Islam. But most of them ruled Hindus with an iron hand which is against the ethos of real Islam. In consequence, a time came that Kashmir witnessed the outbreak of the worst kind of religious intolerance, in later years, to the extent that a set of rules was issued for Kashmiri Pandits (Source: 'Kashmir As It Is'). This set of rules included:

- Muslim rulers shall not allow fresh construction of Hindu temples and shrines or their repair.
- Pandits shall not ride a harnessed horse or move around with arms. They shall not wear rings with diamonds.
- Pandits shall not build houses in the neighbourhood of Muslims.
- They shall not dispose of their dead in the neighbourhood of Muslim graveyards and shall not weep or wail over their dead.

- Muslim travellers shall not be refused lodging in the Hindu temples or shrines where they should be treated as guests for three days.
- Non-Muslims shall leave their assembly whenever the Muslims enter their premises.
- The dress of non-Muslims shall be different from that of Muslims to enable their easy distinction.

In response to this set of rules, there was a rebellion from the Pandits which was suppressed, and their temples and shrines were destroyed. To add to their horror, Jazia (the religious tax) was imposed on them. There was unleashing of brutality, barbarism, and vandalism. They were left with no choice but to abandon their religion or their homeland.

They say that six *maunds* of sacred thread, called 'Janau', were collected from the Pandits who were converted to Islam under force and seven *maunds* were collected from the Pandits who resisted at the cost of their lives and didn't accept the conversion (*maund is an Indian unit of weight, one maund is about 37 kgs*). The fear of existence led to the First Mass Exodus of Kashmiri Hindus.

Wuzmel: Ma, this must have been very threatening!

Sheen: Yes, my child. That isn't the end. As mentioned earlier, Kashmiri Pandits have been leaving the valley year after year for ages.

Wuzmel: That is a pity.

Sheen: Let me talk about the second mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits. Will you like me to continue, or we can have a break? In that case, I shall order your favourite ice cream for you, or we may drive to an Ice Cream Parlour.

Wuzmel: Yes, I would love a break; a break that fetches me an ice cream that too at my favourite ice cream parlour.

Sheen: Wuzmel, shall we go to a nearby ice cream parlour?

Wuzmel: No Ma, you drive me to my favourite ice cream parlour. I understand that you will have to drive a little far. Ma, let us freshen up and change but no formals please.



[THE DUO RETURNS AFTER THE BREAK]

Sheen: Wuzmel, how was the break?

Wuzmel: It was nice and so was the ice cream. Please continue, Ma.

Sheen: OK, I will now tell you about the 'Second Mass Exodus'

THE SECOND MASS EXODUS (1506-1585)

Prof B. L. Bhan mentions in 'Paradise Lost' that Chaks, who belonged to the land of Dares of Daristan of Gilgit Hanza Region, possessed physical power and were very rough and extremely wild. Shahmir recognized their characteristics and recruited them in his forces. Though the Chaks belonged to the Shia sect of Muslims, but they were no less brutal and left no stone unturned in killing, looting and subjecting Pandits to the most inhuman atrocities. They ensured their Mass conversion to Islam. All those who withstood the conversion were brutally killed and many found ways of running away from their motherland.

Quoting Dr. M.L. Kapoor, "It took Islam almost six centuries to secure a strong foothold in Kashmir. Subsequently, with a jet speed, it galloped through and within the next one hundred years over shadowed Hinduism and claimed a majority."

When the situation in Kashmir was extremely deplorable, Sultan Fatah Shah (1506-16) tried his best to ascertain normalcy under the rule of law, but he failed miserably in bringing change and a stage came that the power of the later Sultan started diminishing. It was at that stage that the Chaks exploited the situation to the full. They succeeded in dominating the ruling machinery, including the courts, overthrew the Sultan Empire and neutralised their political rivals and opponents. The Chaks were no less merciless than their earlier Sunni rulers and ensured the ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Pandits by exercising their brutal methods. Chaks ensured the imposition of Jazia Tax on Pandits and made them pay for observing their religious ceremonies and rituals. They were pressurized psychologically to the extent that most of them accepted their conversion to Islam and those who didn't were brutally killed though some of them succeeded in escaping to safer places in the neighbourhood of Kashmir valley.

The second mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits was a massive exodus, engineered in such a way that it resulted in changing the

basic character of the heritage and cultural identity of the original Kashmiri habitats beyond recognition.

Sheen: Now I will briefly cover the Third, Fourth and Fifth Mass Exoduses of Kashmiri Pandits.

Wuzmel: Right Ma.

THIRD MASS EXODUS (1585-1753)

During his visit to Kashmir in 1589, Akbar was highly moved by learning the deplorable plight of Kashmiri Pandits who were being practically crushed under the weight of Jazia and the cruel methods of forced conversion practised by Chaks and various other Islamic rulers. Akbar was a very tolerant leader and didn't believe in discriminating and humiliating Kashmiri Pandits. He withdrew the black law of Jazia and rehabilitated Pandits. He involved them in managing and running the administration of Kashmir. Kashmiri Pandits flourished during his rule. They were happy while they practised their faith and religion without any fear.

Subsequent Mughal rulers were not so tolerant, and the catastrophe was leashed out once again during the rule of Aurangzeb. He reimposed Jazia and wielded his sword freely to ensure more and more conversions. He used all filthy and barbaric methods in doing so.

Things became so unbearable for Kashmiri Pandits that under duress they approached Sri Guru Teg Bahadur Singh, at Anand Singh Sahib Gurdwara. The Guru was highly moved on hearing the pathetic plight of Pandits and went to Delhi for redressal of their grievances. On meeting Aurangzeb, he, along with his three disciples, was instead asked to embrace Islam but they preferred death to change their 'Dharma'. Barbaric Aurangzeb ordered their execution and Guru's head was slit by the executor Jalal-ud-din Jalal.

Despite the supreme sacrifice, the terror of Hindus continued day after day and so did the process of the exodus.

Sheen: *Zuv (a Kashmiri affectionate way of addressing a child),* you have been hearing my narration of atrocities with swollen eyes. It makes me emotional, but I will continue because the day of truth has dawned and a mother has taken the courage to share, with her child, innumerable miseries that our forefathers have been subjected to for centuries.

Wuzmel: Ma, my heart weeps but please continue to share the truth.

Sheen: OK I'll tell you a few things about 'The Fourth Mass Exodus'.

Wuzmel: Ma, I promise to wear a heart of steel.

FOURTH MASS EXODUS (1753)

Prof. B. L. Bhan writes: Following close on the heels of Faqierullah's tyrannical and fanatic misrule came his diabolical son, Fazal Kanth, the Chief Minister whose Subedar beheaded Kailash Dhar in broad daylight in the open court of Shia-Muslim Governor Amir Khan and gave him a contemptuous watery burial in the river Jhelum. Then he went amuck killing and plundering Kashmiri Pandits. This episode so alarmed and panicked Kashmiri Pandits that they felt helpless and desperate. The whole environment became so hostile to them that they fled to Poonch and Kabul for safety and shelter.

Prof Bhan adds: Physical torture in the most ruthless fashion, mental agony, emotional, spiritual anguish, fleecing impunity taxes and indignity heaped on the male members of the hapless community... the unbeaten will, of the Kashmiri Pandits, to preserve

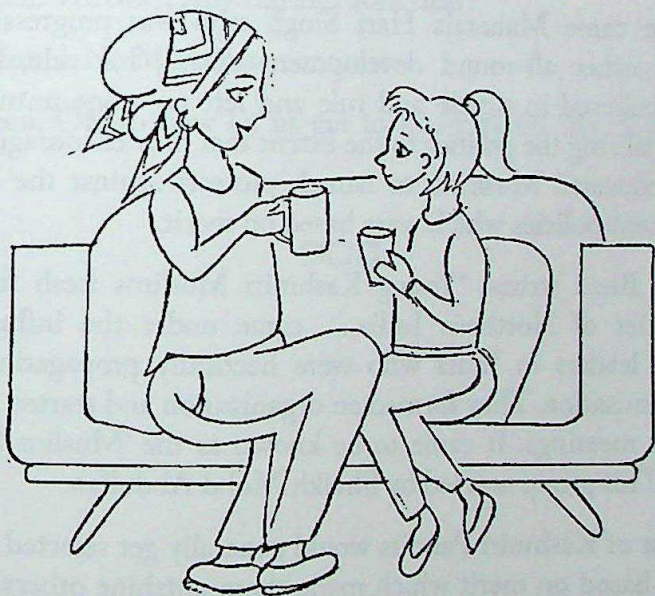
the faith of their forefathers, could have perhaps been the reason that compelled this exquisitely cultured, literate, non-violent and highly tolerant community, with rich and radiant heritage, to flee the land of their genesis – the land of their saints and sages...

Many attribute this event as a prime reason that led to what they call the 'Fourth Mass Exodus' of Kashmiri Pandits.

Sheen: Now let me throw some light on the 'Fifth Mass Exodus of Kashmiri Hindus'. Are you ready or...?

Wuzmel: Ma, I feel a little tired, physically and emotionally. Shall we sit on the sofa?

Sheen: By all means dear! Come, sit on the sofa. Be comfortable. Let me pick up a cup of coffee as well.



Wuzmel: Thanks Ma, hope it is fine with you.

Sheen: Yes, my dear. Change is always good... and now 'The Fifth Mass Exodus...'

THE FIFTH MASS EXODUS (1931)

Quoting Prof B. L. Bhan, "Despite having been made victims of repeated humiliations, relentless atrocities, a series of reigns of terror, religious fanaticism of the worst type known to the world... this nationalistic group preferred to break but didn't bend. It didn't even rush to make compromises even at the cost of their lives... It was the great Pandit Birbal Dhar whose maturity and political maneuvering paved the path for Maharaja Ranjit Singh to re-establish a Hindu Government in J & K State. It was in the year 1820 that the Sikhs established a rule of peace which subsequently started fading away. The Dogras stepped in, established their rule and administered Kashmir Valley, Jammu and Ladakh regions... Dogras were tolerant rulers and ushered a reign of peace, more so for Hindus."

Then came Maharaja Hari Singh who was progressive and tried to usher all-round development during his rule, but the British believed in divide and rule and left no stone unturned in communalising the politics to the extent that they encouraged some young, educated Muslims, to launch protests against the existing recruitment policies which were based on merit.

Prof Bhan writes, "Young Kashmiri Muslims fresh from the universities of Northern India,... came under the influence of Muslim leaders in India who were hectically propagating... for Pan-Islamisation. They formed an organization and started holding frequent meetings. It came to be known as the 'Muslim Reading Room'. This group was led by Sheikh Mohd Abdullah.

Most of Kashmiri Pandits would generally get selected for civil services based on merit which made them outshine others. Sheikh Mohd Abdullah minced no words in expressing his full resentment against the existing system which was based on merit. The flamboyant Sheikh Abdullah made provocative speeches in mosques and all over. As a result, communal tension reached its pinnacle waiting for a spark for its ignition.

13th July 1931 should go as a black day in the history of J & K State. It was on this day that the sparks of communal tension spread once again and Kashmiri Pandits were taken by surprise and made soft targets. It so happened that a mob of Muslim youth gate crashed the Central Jail located in Srinagar. The state police fired over the rowdy mob which resulted in the killing of ten agitators. As a result, there was loot and murder of Kashmiri Pandits once again where dozens were killed, and many others wounded in Tehsil Nagam. Many shops and houses belonging to Kashmiri Pandits were set on fire in areas around Zaina Kadal and Maharaj Gunj.

Prof Bhan adds, "Sheikh Abdulla in his first ever addresses to Kashmiri Pandits in Sheetalnath is on record having blamed it on the goons for the communal disharmony."

Sheen: Wuzmel, Any clarifications dear?

Wuzmel: No Ma, please continue.

Sheen: OK so now let us get to know about the 'Sixth Mass Exodus'.



PART - V

THE SIXTH MASS EXODUS

Sheen: Wuzmel, it may be appropriate at this stage to share with you the situation that existed in J & K at the time of our independence in 1947. If you recollect, I mentioned it in our earlier part of the conversation.

Wuzmel: Fine Ma! I was just thinking of reminding you.

THE SIXTH MASS EXODUS

India was declared independent in August 1947, and simultaneously a new Islamic state, Pakistan was born. At that time the princely state of Jammu & Kashmir (J & K) was under the rule of Maharaja Hari Singh. Lord Mountbatten, the then Governor General of India, gave maharaja a choice and advised him well in advance to decide whether to accede to India or Pakistan. He had to convey his decision by 15th August 1947.

Hari Singh was aware that acceding to India meant an end to feudalism rather than monarchy because Pt. Nehru had made the introduction of popular rule a pre-requisite for acceding to India. They say that, on the advice of his spiritual *guru* and some extremist elements, he drew a standstill agreement with Pakistan with an understanding not to attack each other. With his firm aim to keep feudalism intact, he blundered by not acceding to either. He thus acted in a way to avoid both Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah who, he knew, was a highly popular leader of the valley. He remained in a fool's paradise by believing that Pakistan would honour the agreement in spite of knowing fairly well the glaring unprecedented havoc that the Indian partition had led to.

Pakistan engineered and suddenly launched an invasion, locally known as the 'Kabaili Raid', on 22nd October 1947 with a bang

that not only shook the maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir but also the newly formed Indian government. It was around this time that Sh. S. N. Dhar from All India Radio, a former personal assistant to Pandit Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, was sent to the house of the political Assistant to the Prime Minister where a small group of Kashmiri young boys had gathered to listen to an eyewitness account of the invasion given by a pilot, Captain J. N. Dhar.

In his book 'From Partition to Operation Bluestar', S. N. Dhar says, "Captain Dhar, himself a Kashmiri, had just returned after flying a couple of reconnaissance sorties over the Kashmir valley. What he told us was grim and terrifying. He had seen the road from the border town of Kohalla to Baramulla full of armed Kabailis driving towards Srinagar. Baramulla was in flames, as were many other small villages and hamlets overrun by the invaders. Captain Dhar saw another group of Kabailis moving towards Manasbal lake, obviously in an effort to outflank army resistance in Srinagar. A third group was marching to Srinagar airport."

Those days Srinagar airport was practically just an airstrip meant to enable maharaja to land his private aeroplane. The airport was supported by an ordinary communication link in the form of a weak radio set. As per S. N. Dhar, "Captain Dhar told us that if Indian troops were not sent immediately, the fate of the valley would be sealed. If the airport was lost, nothing could be done, he said. This naturally sent shivers down our spines. As Kashmiris we all had near and dear ones in the valley... The problem was how to get the Government of India to agree to commit Indian troops to Kashmir, which had not of course, acceded to India."

The tribals, supported by the Pakistani army, invaded Kashmir on 22nd October 1947. They were armed with modern weapons when the majority of the National Conference leaders were in jail because of the oppressive policies exercised by maharaja. They resorted to looting, raping and killing many Kashmiri Pandits, Sikhs and even many Muslims. They attacked in the most brutal way that mankind

has ever witnessed mainly in Baramulla, Sopore, Badgam, Gushi, Tikkar, Zaloor, Kandi Khass and various other villages which are incident in Baramulla and present Kupwara Districts. Like mad they spared none young or old and raped any woman that they came across including the nuns in the Baramulla convent.

A young National Conference leader, Maqbool Sherwani was tied to a wooden cross and subjected to a firing squad in Baramulla city chowk. They ordered him to shout 'Pakistan Zindabad'. To their utter dismay, he shouted 'Hindustan Zindabad' and then followed a rain of bullets which riddled his body apart. To add to the agony the Kabailis nailed a piece of paper to his forehead saying, 'Similar fate awaits friends of India'. In a similar way, the body of Master Abdul Aziz of Muzafaabad was shot and his body was riddled apart with a rain of bullets because he had sheltered Hindu and Sikh women in his house to save them from these brutes. (*Source: Sheikh Abdulla's first address to the Kashmiri public in Lalchowk, immediately after taking over as the Prime Minister of Kashmir*).

In such a challenging situation Hari Singh behaved unlike a maharaja of his stature. On learning about the invasion he ordered his army chief, General Rajinder Singh, to proceed to Uri, the town in the Baramulla district which the raiders had just occupied. The instructions were specific, 'Fight to the last man and the last bullet'. Though his forces were hopelessly outnumbered, but he, along with his troops, fought with exemplary bravery. The general fought till the end and made his supreme sacrifice which was later recognized by awarding him Maha Vir Chakra posthumously.

S. N. Dhar, in his book, mentions that knowing fairly well about the Kabailis who were on their way to Srinagar, the maharaja decided to head 'Dusshera' celebrations and also reviewed a colourful parade of the state forces while his soldiers were at war with invaders. To add to the agony, he held a glittering durbar at night in 'Chandmari Maidan' which was followed by the durbar proceedings in his family palace. While the proceedings were at the climax, the lights

suddenly went off because the raiders had destroyed the power station at Muhara which was the only source of power in the state. At this stage, maharaja was taken aback and left with no choice but to contact Lord Mountbatten. He contacted him and profusely pleaded to send the Indian army to save the valley.

While maharaja's request was under serious consideration by India's Defence Committee, V. P. Menon, Secretary Home, accompanied by two defence officers, of the Indian army and the air force, were ushered to Kashmir. Incidentally, the army officer was Brigadier Sam Manekshaw, the then Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) who finally rose to become the Indian army chief and was instrumental in defeating the Pakistan army in the 1971 Indo-Pak war and the creation of Bangladesh. Menon returned the same day to Delhi with the instrument of accession, signed by the maharaja. Nehru held discussions with Meher Chand Mahajan, prime minister of J & K State and Sheikh Abdulla, National Conference leader. They say that Sheikh Abdulla urged Nehru to accept the accession without any delay and send the troops to the valley immediately.

While various constitutional aspects were being deliberated in Delhi, in consequence of the accession of J & K, the wild Kabailis were busy creating havoc with their ferocious and ruthless hordes which, as they say, turned the 'Paradise' into the 'Valley of Death'. Quoting Dhar from his book, "During the five days between October 22 to 27, thousands of people were killed, wounded or maimed. Anything moving was shot, anything glittering was taken and any building or hamlet insight was set ablaze – all to the glory of Jinnah's concept of Jihad."

While in Sopore and surrounding villages, ire of Kabailis would often be directed towards non-Muslims (Hindus and Sikhs) and those Muslims who tried to save their non-Muslim brethren. Quoting Major General Pran Koul (who hails from the dense streets

of Sopore) from his book "The Silence Speaks", "My grandmother and parents often narrated bitter stories of the agony they faced when the invaders from Pakistan attacked Kashmir in 1947. They say the invaders came in waves, armed with weapons, and spread their wild tentacles on the peace-loving Kashmiri people. Their ire would often be directed towards non-Muslims and those Muslims who tried to save their non-Muslim brethren.

When they were about to reach Baramulla District which, amongst various prominent places including Sopore, the Sikhs and Hindus left their hearths and fled from their homes. They hid in jungles and other safe places without food for days together. Many families were separated. It appears that my parents, along with my grandparents, hid in the jungles adjacent to the 'Wular Lake'. My grandmother... was crippled after the birth of my youngest uncle, about a decade before this incident. She narrated that my father would carry her on his shoulders, walk and at times run for miles and miles in the jungles for fear of their lives. Many of their close relatives, who were caught off guard, were shot dead.

The invaders, for some reason, were known to be more brutal towards the Sikhs. My parents narrated that on many occasions they had witnessed elders of Sikh families lining up their women folk, on the bank of the 'Wular Lake', beheading them with swords, as a last resort to save their honour. They would then kill themselves after immersing the bodies of the women in the lake. It appears that brutality was at its zenith during such periods, and one wonders where *Bhagwan* alias *Allah* lived those days".

My parents would often return to their house expecting the calamity to be over, but to their misfortune, some of the invaders would return repeatedly. On one occasion my father was caught and asked at gunpoint what he did. He posed as a Muslim and told them that he cooked for rich people. He was lucky to be spared while many others were not.

One of my aunts was made to board a truck to be taken along with them, leaving her three-month-old baby in my uncle's lap. When the truck started, my uncle ran behind it, like a madman and begged them, if nothing else, then to take the baby as well. By God's grace better sense prevailed and one of the invaders made her jump out of the truck to join her husband and the child. Such gestures, they say, were very rare."

What Pran Koul adds, which should not go unsaid, "It was at such times that our Muslim neighbours gave shelter to the Hindu women folk, at the cost of their own lives. My grandmother and parents say that these Muslim women even loaned their clothes helping them camouflage as Muslims. The invaders mistook them for Muslims, as they had completely merged with the Muslim families, with whom they ate and lived until the crisis ended and thus, they were spared from the clutches of the demons.

We owe the lives of our parents to those Muslim families who saved them in 1947 else, we would have not been around to tell the tale today. This was *Kashmiriyat* at its prime, the culture whose seeds were sown by our ancestors."

Coming back to the situation of affairs in J & K as it prevailed then. Maharaja Hari Singh found himself in thick soup and decided to run away from his summer capital on midnight of 27-28 October by road. He reached Jammu the next day evening. They say on reaching Jammu he uttered one sentence, 'We have lost Kashmir'.

When Govt. of India decided to send troops to Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah was in Delhi. He was very eager to go to Kashmir on the very first flight. At that stage, the political assistant to Nehru told S. N. Dhar to accompany Menon and Sheikh Abdullah to Delhi airport where an air force plane was waiting to fly them to Srinagar. Dhar says that Sheikh Abdullah was repeatedly ushering the driver to drive faster and faster though he was already driving at a speed of about 70-80 Km. But by the time they reached the airport, it was too

late to fly to Srinagar. Dhar says, "Sheikh Abdullah was crestfallen, and large tears rolled down his cheeks. Back in Panditji's house, he was like a caged tiger. Every few minutes he talked to Bakshi Gulam Mohammad who was holding the fort in Srinagar." He wanted him to hold on for one night. He got a discouraging message from Bakshi that the administration was completely paralysed in the valley as a consequence to the sudden departure of the maharaja from the scene.

It should be noted that Bakshi Gulam Mohammad played a great roll under the circumstances when the entire administrative machinery collapsed which should be recognized by Indian strategists, historians and future generations. Dhar says, "He collected a volunteer force armed with hockey sticks punting poles daggers and a few rifles and shotguns collected from 'shikaris' (hunters) and police stations. He called the ramshackle force 'Kashmiri militia'. The volunteers were deployed in small batches around Srinagar's seven bridges and told to patrol the area and make a great din at regular intervals by shouting slogans and firing in the air to create the illusion of a big force preparing to meet the raiders who were camping in Chhatabal, a suburb of Srinagar". Probably Bakshi's strategy worked because the raiders didn't advance at night. They were highly indisciplined and instead wasted their efforts in killing, raping and looting. In the bargain, they gave the Indian army a chance to fight back."

The next morning the first flight landed in Srinagar with Sheikh Abdulla and the famous Sikh Regiment commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Ranjit Rai. He secured the airport and drew up his strategy to delay the advance of the raiders to give enough time to the Indian army reinforcements to build up the strength in the state capital. He met the raiders, of about five thousand strength, short of Baramulla and had to withdraw to Pattan which is a small town halfway between Srinagar and Baramulla. The next morning fierce battle took place in which Lieutenant Colonel Rai gave supreme sacrifice

and was awarded Maha Vir Chakra posthumously. He ensured that raiders were slowed down and thus subsequent reinforcements got much-needed reaction time to deploy the troops and ammunition.

Pakistan had launched attacks on three fronts viz; Chhamb-Jaurian-Poonch in the Jammu sector; Uri-Kishanganaga in the valley and Dras-Kargil-Leh up to the north. Brigadier Usman was a fighting genius and organized even the civilian population to fight the invaders who had surrounded Poonch town from all sides and the terrain was favourable to them. Brigadier Usman ensured that his forces penetrated the Pakistani ring. A great warrior as he was, he also held on to Naushera but unfortunately, he was hit on his head by an enemy splinter and died in the bunker while fighting. His body was draped in the national flag. It is worthwhile to mention that Pandit Nehru was one of the Pallbearers and the warrior was buried at Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi.

In the Dras-Kargil sector another fighting genius, Lieutenant Colonel (afterwards Major General) Rajinder Singh Sparrow made Pakistani invaders to run away. He commanded 7 Light Cavalry. It is worthwhile to record that he managed to bring tanks to Zojila which was at a height of 11,000 feet though there was no motorable road between Srinagar and Zojila at that time. The warrior got the tanks dismantled at Srinagar. The dismantled tanks were then brought to Sonamarg over the foot track on mule packs where they were assembled again and then sent into battle near Zojila. Pakistanis were scared on seeing the tanks. They didn't believe their eyes and ran away in utter panic.

Dhar says, "The Indian army pushed the Kabailis out of Baramulla, Mohura and Uri on one side and Kupwara, Pulwama and Kishenganga on the other... By the end of December, the Indian army had gained the upper hand at all fronts and the Indian commanders were confident that in due course they would be able to liberate the entire area of the state including Muzaffarabad... Then on 1st January 1948, Nehru referred the Kashmir issue to United

Nations' Security Council, confident that the world body would provide justice". But this concept of Nehru misfired, and the rest is history.

Coming back to the merciless onslaught by invaders, the brutal killings and rapes of Pandit and Sikh women – the brutal acts may be one of the most tragic events in world history. With the passage of time, Kashmiri Hindus started the next chapter of their lives in spite of the horror and barbaric treatment meted out to them by the invaders, fresh in their minds.

But post-independence, Sheikh Abdulla, the then Prime Minister of J & K State, started planning and implementing his preconceived ideas of the "Muslim Front Room" as mentioned in para (3) under the fifth Exodus of Kashmiri Pandits. Consequently, disparities in admission to professional institutions and Government jobs continued unabated even during the period of Bakhshi Ghulam Mohd and Mohd Sadiq, the subsequent Prime Ministers of the then J & K State. It may not be possible to include all the disparities in this booklet. However, just quoting an example to acquaint you with the type of disparities which were exercised by the State Government: The Kashmiri Pandit school teachers were made to face day-to-day psychological harassment of serving under their Headmasters who otherwise had been their students. These teachers, led by Late Sh. T.N. Ticku, a well-respected and liberal educationist, finally knocked on the doors of the Supreme Court of India for the redressal way back in early sixties.

Their main objection was that the criteria for the promotion to Gazetted post (Headmaster) were against the principle of equality – the discriminatory criteria that J & K Government followed were:

"(1) 50 % of the gazetted posts to be filled by promotion are given to Muslims; (2) about 60% of the remaining 50% of the posts are filled by Jammu Hindus (Hindus from Jammu Province of the State, Majority of whom are Dogras); and

(3) the remaining 40% of the 50% of the posts are given to Kashmiri Pandits; some time one or two posts are given to Sikhs out of turn.”

These teachers had to fight their case in the Supreme Court for years and years till they got the final justice. They faced innumerable hardships to the extent that Sh. T.N. Ticku chose to dispose off his house in Sopore, to withstand the agony and took his result-oriented fight to the finish. It may be worthwhile to share that a very senior and eminent advocate of the time, Sh. Setalvard (the then former Attorney General of India), was so much moved when Sh. Ticku narrated the gist of the case to him that, at a later stage, he offered to plead the case without charging any further fee.

Pran Koul refers to Sh T N Ticku as his mentor – the personality who has influenced him during his growing-up years. Both had a very close uncle-nephew association. Sh Ticku had shared with Pran Koul that G.M Sadiq, the then Prime Minister of J& K State, had offered him lucrative government appointments which he politely refused. He instead fought for the implementation of the Supreme Court decision and took the fight to its finish. He fought the legal battle on the basis of principles and not communal grounds which was generally understood by the then Muslim colleagues at large. This is borne by the fact that after his superannuation he was persuaded by the governing body of Islamia schools, to take over as the Principal of their prestigious Islamia High School and also be an adviser to various other Islamia schools in Sopore. The school had both Hindu and Muslim teachers of repute on their staff. He was not very keen but his Muslim Colleagues persuaded him to the extent that he finally accepted it and introduced substantial positive changes within the system which were recognised and appreciated by the governing board.

Over the years the bias in recruitment to Govt. jobs and admissions to professional and higher institutions of learning led to latent and slow exodus of Kashmiri Hindu youth.

In the meantime, there were some serious mischievous attempts made by some politicians to disturb communal harmony. In the year 1964, the pious relic of Profit Mohd disappeared from the world-famous Hazratbal Mosque located in the Hazratbal area of Srinagar. This led to a tense environment within the state. Pran Koul says that as a child of about ten years, he had personally witnessed huge processions of protestors, in Sopore, where Kashmiri Pandits and Sikhs joined Kashmiri Muslims and lectured along with them, shoulder to shoulder, in asking the government of the day to catch the culprits. However, after some damage, the situation was brought under control, but it further added to the sense of insecurity in the minds of the Kashmiri Pandit community and fear that anything could happen anytime.

Prof. Bhan says, "The agitation by Muslims following the disappearance of the holy relic at Hazratbal Dargah in 1964 and the Kashmiri Pandit agitation following the conversion of a minor Pandit girl, Parmeshwari, to Islam was a severe setback to the existing Pandit social fabric. It aggravated the process of the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits that was otherwise going on quietly uncared for by the so-called nationalists."

Sheen: Pran Koul shared with me that during his visits to Kashmir till 1988, he could never imagine that such an exodus would ever take place, or was so near because, in spite of all the differences between the two communities, Hindus and Muslims were living with reasonable cohesion. He narrated some of his personal experiences of his childhood and thereafter, maybe till the mid-eighties.

He told me that his family lived in Sopore till their house caught fire in 1970. Quoting him from his book, 'The Silence Speaks', "The society we lived in was well-knit with a cluster of Muslim neighbours on one side and Hindus on the other. Our immediate Muslim neighbours were very fond of me. The lady of the house was called 'Mokha'. My parents told me that when I was about two years

old, I had developed a skin disorder on my right leg and would often cry out in pain. The Muslim woman would take me to her home, look after me and make me sleep on her bed. This continued for over a month. They also mentioned that she took me to some *Hakim* and rubbed the locally made ointments given by him daily until it was cured. My parents probably reiterated this so that I remember it throughout my life. I should say, and say it with pride, that they have succeeded.”

Koul's father finally constructed a house in 'New Colony', Sopore in 1975. He says, “When my parents moved to their new house, we once again had immediate Hindu and Muslim neighbours. The adjacent house belonged to a Muslim family. They showered lots of love and affection on us and so did my parents who treated their children like their own. I remember when I would come home with my family on annual leave, we used to meet the Muslim lady 'Dedha' first, take her blessings and only after that, we would see our mother and other family members. If ever, by mistake, we happened to open our door first, my mother would ask us to meet 'Dedha'. This was not for show and goes a long way to demonstrate the strong bonds in diversity, shared back then. I remember a day would be fixed when we would go over to their house for a meal and would feast on the delicacies prepared by them.”

However, the bonds of brotherhood broke so soon and the cohesive culture of so-called Kashmiriyat perished into insignificance as if it never existed. This was mainly due to negative politics played not only by the local politicians and fundamentalists but also by the central Govt.

The story goes as: Mr Gul Shah, the brother-in-law of Dr. Farooq Abdulla, snatched power from Farooq Abdullah while Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India. He was known as an unpredictable, communal and vindictive Kashmiri politician. Among the first things that he planned and executed was to establish what came to be known as the 'Shah Mosque' within the premises

of an ancient temple in the New Civil Secretariat area of Jammu. In reaction to this unlawful act, the people of Jammu held serious protests and demonstrations all along the streets of Jammu and it was on 20th February 1986 that he entered Srinagar, provoked Muslims and succeeded in communalising the situation.

It is alleged that the then Congress President, Mufti Mohd Sayeed, contributed to spreading the communal fire in 1986, in the area of his influence i.e., the southern part of Kashmir. They say that the main targets were temples in Vanpoh, Lukbhavan, Anantnag, Fatehpur, Salar, Akoora and various other villages spread out in the southern part of Kashmir. This area had got spared from the wild paws of Pakistani invaders (Kabailis) in 1947 who had then created havoc in villages and townships incident in the Northern region of Kashmir (Baramulla and the current Kupwara districts). What is surprising is that the Govt., intelligence agencies and the mass media remained mute spectators. This was a blot on the secular brigade and against the spirit of the Indian Constitution.

Kashmiri Pandits were shocked to see that the state administration had wet their hands with blood and so boldly. The idea of the Bapu, the father of our nation, that he had seen a ray of hope of survival of amity and harmony in Kashmir had started dwindling.

Prof Bhan writes, "The post-independence period of J & K witnessed... slow and steady exodus of Kashmiri Pandit community owing mainly due to the following prime and significant factors:

- Breakdown of law and order
- Ever dwindling and waning chances for securing Govt. appointments despite their requisite merit and qualification
- Abolition of the Zamindari system, which though a welcome step in principle, resulting in turning thousands of Kashmiri Pandit landowners into paupers as no compensation in lieu of their land was granted to them...

- Discrimination in the admission of Kashmiri Pandit youth to higher educational and technical and professional institutions.”

These facts mainly contributed to the latent exodus of young Kashmiri Pandits though slowly but steadily. The religious fundamentalism, encouraged by some local politicians added to the already existing gulf between the two communities. In consequence, thousands of Kashmiri Pandits started leaving their motherland and this resulted in ‘The Sixth Mass Exodus’ of Kashmiri Pandits’.

[Sheen gets conscious of the fact that the poor child might be feeling disturbed by learning about the series of exoduses. She being both - the narrator and the mother - appreciated that the child deserved punctuation in the form of a short break]

Sheen: Shall we continue dear or you want to have a break? I personally feel that you need one.

Wuzmel: Ma, as you wish.

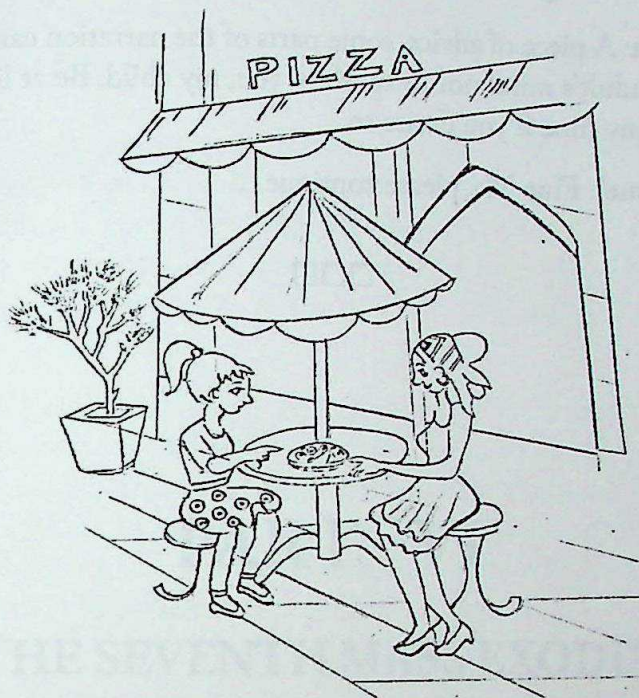
Sheen: Let me take you for a joy ride. If you wish, we can have a Pizza of your choice in your favourite roadside restaurant and then return.

Wuzmel: Oh! That will be so nice. But Ma, please continue when we are back. I don't want to miss the truth. Another thing Ma...

Sheen: My baby, please speak.

Wuzmel: Ma, we will share one pizza... I will take only a bite and we can get another pizza packed and I want to enjoy that at home.

Sheen: Yes my dear, by all means.



Wuzmel: Ma, please tell the man at the counter to pack the pizza for us.

Sheen: Don't worry dear, I have already told him.

[As a mother Sheen wanted Wuzmel in a relaxed mood, thus the reason for the break because she understood that the subsequent narration may be hard for innocent Wuzmel to hear... The mother and daughter pair resume their conversation after a pleasant break]

Sheen: Now I will explain to you what you really asked for – 'The Seventh Mass Exodus of Kashmiri Pandits' (so-called Migration) which includes the holocaust night of 19th January 1990.

Wuzmel: Right Ma.

Sheen: A piece of advice, some parts of the narration can disturb any sane adult's mind not to speak of you, my child. Be at liberty to stop me any time if you desire so.

Wuzmel: Fine Ma, please continue.

□□□

THE SEVENTH MASS EXODUS - 1952

PART - VI

THE SEVENTH MASS EXODUS

THE SEVENTH MASS EXODUS - 1990

As elaborated earlier the Kashmiri Hindu community is known for having withstood various waves of brutalities, to which they were subjected from time to time, over a span of multiple centuries by various barbaric rulers, starting from Shamir in 1339 AD, the architect of Muslim rule in Kashmir, followed by Chaks, Shahs, Mughals and Afghans.

Pran Koul in his book 'The Silence Speaks' writes, "There is a Kashmiri saying that there came a time, under the rule of some barbaric rulers when only 'Eleven Kashmiri Hindu families were left in Kashmir'. I could never believe it, but the turmoil from 1989 onwards convinced me that it must have been a fact. The eleven families must have flourished over the centuries to face yet another exodus now."

Wuzmel, before proceeding further let me be deliberate in putting forth a lesson which should be noted by every Kashmiri Hindu child, of the present and subsequent generations - they ought to be proud of their ancestors because in spite of all the brutalities that were forced on them, they have demonstrated their resilience and withstood physical and mental torture, from time to time. The takeaway is that every time they have ensured that their only weapon 'The Weapon of Education' is passed on from generation to generation - they have thus kept their flag flying high and higher! However, the story will be incomplete without mentioning that they experienced substantial punctuations of peaceful existence during the reign of Zain-ul-Abidin, Akbar, Sikhs, and Dogra rulers.

It was mainly because of, what I call, 'The Weapon of Education', that Kashmiri Hindus always excelled academically and professionally under hard, tough, and tense environments. As a result, they occupied various state administrative posts and got into

professional and higher academic institutions strictly on the basis of their merit in spite of the discriminatory promotion and recruitment rules.

While the wounds of 1986 were fresh in the minds of Kashmiri Hindus, Pakistan was busy in training the militants and loading them with weapons for carrying out terrorist activities in the valley. They succeeded to a great extent by using the religious card after influencing and involving the local Kashmiri fundamentalists.

Some compulsive reasons for Pakistan to engineer and support the terrorism in Kashmir were:

- Right from the inception of Pakistan, the Pak rulers had developed a serious obsession with Kashmir. They were always lost in reveries and obsessed with the fancy of the inclusion of Kashmir into their territory. Their invasion, to conquer Kashmir in 1947 was fully repulsed by the Indian army and they returned bruised.
- They attempted to infiltrate in 1965 and further attacked to annex Kashmir from India but were again beaten back.
- Their attack of 1971 resulted in the division of Pakistan into two parts when Bangladesh was born. In consequence Pakistan army comprising about 93,000 soldiers, under Lieutenant General Niazi, surrendered to our Indian Army which so far has been the largest military surrender after Second World War II.

The defeat of 1971 has been a serious blow to the pride of the Pakistani Army and it left them highly demoralized. This defeat made deep inroads into the psyche and morale of the Pak Army and their politicians, to the extent that they have always been urging for revenge.

A broad analysis of 'The Seventh Exodus' reveals that the situation didn't dawn overnight. Eyewitness accounts reveal that

religious non-Kashmiri preachers, called 'Allah wallay' by Kashmiri locals, started visiting the mosques and 'Madrassas', way back in the sixties and attempted to brainwash both young and adults in a way which was far away from the ideals of Islam. This practice was initiated as an exercise to poison the minds of locals against non-muslims and the Indian state slowly but steadily.

To add to it, Gen Zia-ul-Haq, landed on the stage as the President of Pakistan. He was amongst the bruised Pakistan Army soldiers of the 1971 War. He was very shrewd and accelerated in sowing the seeds of fundamentalism, in Kashmir through proxy. It is said that without wasting any time he conducted a 'Top Secret Meeting' in Islamabad in April 1988 where, as Prof Bhan writes, he said, "Gentlemen, let there be no mistake, however, that our aim remains quite clear and firm... Our Muslim Kashmiri brothers can't be allowed to stay with India for any length of time now. Kashmiri has a few qualities, which we can exploit. First, his shrewdness and intelligence; second his power to persevere under pressure, and third, if I may say so, he is a Master of Political intrigue. If we provide him with means through which he can utilize these qualities, he will deliver the goods". He launched what is known as 'OP TOPAZ' with the primary aim of influencing in positioning men of choice to not only subvert J & K Police Force, financial institutions and the communication network but also exploit the Muslim students and peasants emotionally based on religion. The operation initiated an uncivilized, unlawful, and irreligious approach for its success. The best way to implement this policy was to target Kashmiri Hindus and brand them as Indian agents and traitors.

Jagmohan, the then Governor of J & K, seriously alleges that the then Chief Minister of J & K, Dr Farooq Abdullah, had come to power, after a so-called rigged election in 1983 while Pakistan was busy creating insurgency in the valley. However, many more reasons have been elucidated by him, which contributed to the disturbance and subsequent growth of terrorism in Kashmir: (*Source: Interview with Ms Kalyani Shankar of NEWS X*).

It was in 1984 when Farooq Abdullah created an embarrassing scene for the then Prime Minister, Mrs Gandhi, while she was about to address a rally in Maqbool Bagh, Srinagar. Jagmohan says that the scene cannot be expressed in civilized words... Abdullah had come to power with the support of Congress-I. It is, however, alleged that he played political games with the central Government while Mrs Gandhi was the Prime Minister. This worried her a lot because Punjab had already been engulfed with Militancy and she didn't want it to be replicated in J & K.

It was at this stage that Mrs Gandhi chose to depute her trusted administrative officer, Sh. Jagmohan, as the Governor of J & K State. He took over as Governor from General Krishna Rao on 26th April 1984. Then followed some awkward situations, mainly because of the internal family politics of Abdullachs, which resulted in the dismissal of Farooq Abdulla as the Chief Minister who, at that stage, as is alleged, had done more harm than good both to the politics of J & K state and the central Government.

Then came the elections of 1987 where the main fight was between the National Conference (NC) and the Muslim United Front (MUF), the latter is said to have political allegiance to Pakistan. It is alleged that the elections were seriously rigged, and National Conference was declared the winner with Farooq Abdullah as the Chief Minister. The rigged elections left the MUF cadre bruised. This not only sparked an ignition but added fuel to the fire.

It was at this stage that Pakistan exploited the disturbing political situation in the valley with the help of the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), the separatist organization. They were already receiving arms training in Pakistan. They were further joined by MUF cadre turned militants. It is alleged that the State Government Machinery also facilitated sending the youth across to Pakistan resulting in a mushroom of the terrorist organizations including Al-Jehad, Dukhtarane Milat, Muslim Janbaz Force, Ikhwan-ul- Muslameen, Allah Tigers, Hizbul-Mujahideen etc.

Together they further brainwashed the local youth of fundamental ideology and sent more and more of them across to Pakistan for training which was morally and materialistically supported by the ISI of Pakistan.

The Afghan war ended in 1988. Pakistan engineered to send the Afghan guerrillas, the ruthless fighters, to the valley. It is also on record that during Farooq Abdulla's regime about forty dreaded terrorists were released because of internal subversion. It is alleged that these militants then joined their respective militant organisations. This seriously questions the intention of the then-state Govt. because of which the militants became very active in the state. It is also alleged that no serious action was taken by the state police to catch them. In the meantime, Rajiv Gandhi took over as the Prime Minister of India on 31st October 1984 in consequence of the assassination of his mother, Indira Gandhi. After returning to power in 1987, Farooq Abdullah and Rajiv Gandhi became very friendly which led to what is known as the 'Rajiv-Farooq Accord'. Rajiv Gandhi developed blind faith in Abdulla who, it is alleged, played deceptive political games.

Pran Koul says that during his visit to Kashmir in latter part of 1988, he was aghast to learn that weapons were being stocked and piled up in some pockets in the valley. But there were no raids conducted or any checks exercised on such anti-national activities for reasons best known to the then State administration and central Government intelligence agencies which were deployed in the state. He mentioned that the administration had deteriorated, intentionally or unintentionally, to an unbelievable extent which made the militants bolder and bolder. It resulted in the first causality of a Kashmiri Hindu lady, who was killed in a bomb blast which took place in Hari Singh High Street, Srinagar in March 1989. Pran Koul says that the lady, Smt Prabhawati, was the mother of his close friend Dr. (Prof) Inder Bhat who in the recent past has been Director of a few NITs in the country. The situation was so bad that

the Governor, Sh. Jagmohan, apprised PM Rajiv Gandhi, in writing, about the prevailing deteriorating situation in Kashmir.

Quoting an extract of his letter dated 8th April 1989 to the Prime Minister, Sh. Rajiv Gandhi:

“The situation is fast deteriorating. It has almost reached a point of no return... The Chief Minister stands isolated. He has already fallen – politically as well as administratively, perhaps only constitutional rights remain to be performed. His clutches are too soiled... Personal aberrations have also eroded his public standing. The situation calls for effective intervention. Today may be timely, tomorrow will be too late.”

It is worthwhile to note the language used by Sh. Jagmohan exudes the severity of the situation when he conveyed to the Prime Minister in no uncertain terms: ‘the situation calls for effective intervention. Today may be timely, tomorrow will be too late.’ But Rajiv Gandhi, for reasons best known to him, was not moved as if his friendship with the then Chief Minister was more important than the nation. The ignorance exhibited by Rajiv Gandhi, and the deceptive politics of the Chief Minister, turned the valley into a safe launching ground for terrorist activities and militancy became the order of the day.

In the meantime, there was a change in the central Government and Sh. V. P. Singh (from Janta Dal) took over as the Prime Minister of India on 2nd December 1989 when General K V Krishna Rao was the Governor of J & K State. This was the time when the militants were practically ruling the masses and some selective killings of Kashmiri Hindus had already started. Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), supported by other militants were openly wielding their guns and practically running the administration in proxy at gunpoint. One of the blunders committed by V P Singh’s was the inclusion of Sh. Mufti Sayeed in the central cabinet of ministers

that too as the Home Minister of the country. For this act, India may not forgive him for ages to come. Mufti was a man with shady credentials. He is alleged to have played a role in the communal riots that took place in his Anantnag area of south Kashmir in 1986.

It so happened that within days of Mufti taking over as the Home Minister, Rubaiya Sayeed, his daughter was kidnapped in her native place Nowgam by JKLF front, run by Yasin Malik. The militant group informed that she could only be set free in exchange for about half a dozen dreaded terrorists who were languishing in prison. This was critical. It is said that at 3:30 a.m. on 13th December 1989, two Union Cabinet Ministers, Sh. Inder Kumar Gujral and Sh. Arif Mohammad Khan, personally flew into Srinagar, believing that Farooq was coming in the way of a deal because Farooq held the view that abject surrender to the militants' demands would open the floodgates. It was at 7:00 p.m. on 13th December 1989 that Dr Rubaiya Sayeed was set free; two hours after the government released the five dreaded militants.

This episode further emboldened the militants. The valley started burning and the flames of militancy started touching their zenith. Huge processions of people, with JKLF militants wielding naked arms, flocked the roads in most of the towns including Srinagar, Sopore, Anantnag and Baramulla. The masses were ordered to set their watches in accordance with Pakistan time and the watches of Kashmiri Hindus would often be checked to ensure their obedience. The list of eminent and innocent Kashmiri Hindus was drawn up for their assassination to generate a fear psychosis in the minority community. Their aim was to eliminate eminent Kashmiri Hindu personalities in the field of education, law, politics, engineering and various other fields. Loudspeakers of mosques were misused freely in broad daylight where Kashmiri Hindus were warned to get out of the valley forthwith and leave their ladies and daughters behind...

Alarmed by the prevailing situation, V. P. Singh identified Sh. Jagmohan, the then Lt Governor of Goa, to take over as the

Governor of J & K State mainly because of his honest credentials and administrative skills. V. P. Singh knew that he had been very popular among all the masses in J& K State during his last tenure because of his unbiased administration and all-over development in the state. He was appointed Governor on 19th January 1990. He flew to Srinagar on 20th January but due to the incumbent weather, he had a forced halt in Jammu on 20th January. Finally, he landed in Srinagar on 21st January 1990, practically the second day after the holocaust night of 19th January 1990 when the valley was already burning.

It is alleged that while the militancy was at its prime, the then failed Chief Minister, for reasons best known to him, ordered on 18th January to withdraw paramilitary forces from the rural area. (*Source: Sh. Jagmohan's interview with Ms Kalyani Shankar of NEWS X*). In the meantime, he resigned and subsequently flew to the UK, leaving the fire pan well oiled. This controversial decision, on the Part of the Chief Minister, was uncalled for that too at a time when every village was resonating with militancy. In consequence, militants got a free hand to play havoc all around. The result was that there was no law and order left in the state because of the absence of administration which more than one way facilitated the preplanned killings of Kashmiri Hindus.

Wuzmel: Ma, why do people do all this when there are better things for them to do? Are they not answerable?

Sheen: My child, you are too young to understand the dirty tricks of many of our Indian politicians who have done more damage than any good to our nation. However, there are also some good politicians who have brought laurels to our country, and it is because of them that our country is rising. As you grow, be very honest and brave enough to raise your voice against any dishonest activity

whenever it comes to your notice. Remember an enemy within is more dangerous than an enemy outside.

Wuzmel: Ma, I promise you that like you, I shall always be a good citizen of my "Mother India". I have seen you serving people day and night, with honesty and dedication, irrespective of any creed, caste or religion that too after having suffered so much of discrimination in your childhood.

I salute my grandparents who, despite all the odds, have brought you up and passed on to you, what you call 'The Weapon of Education' that has contributed to your brilliance. You are a beacon of hope and an example for 'The Children of Exodus Survivors'.

Sheen: With a heavy heart, I shall now describe to you the highlights of what I call 'The Seventh Exodus of Kashmiri Hindus'.

Then fell the dark night of 19th January 1990! That night marked a watershed in the history of Kashmir and its culture when an agonizing gulf, between the ideals of real Islam and the then reality on the ground, was predominantly visible through the barbarism that had been ruling the valley for quite some time.

The night when so-called Gandhi Ji's 'A Ray of Hope' had turned into 'A Bundle of Agony'; the night when there was no respect for age, brotherhood, dignity, womanhood and children; the night when Kashmiriyat paled into insignificance and its soul and spirit was buried deep into the ground by the local fundamentalists, under the tutelage of their peers, to the extent that even students slaughtered their teachers; the night when no one in the valley opened his or her lips or spoke a word, willingly or unwillingly, against the prevailing barbarism over Kashmiri Hindus. The overwhelming chaos that broke out that night, from Qazigund to Karnah, signalled the end for every Kashmiri Hindu child, man, and woman.

The militants targeted even those Muslims against whom they had the slightest doubt. As a result, many such innocent Muslims were also killed. It is said that the militants even targeted young girls of some prosperous Muslim Families. On smelling the mischievous intentions of the demons, those Muslim families left Kashmir overnight leaving everything behind.

Jagmohan, the Governor of J & K State, in his interview to Ms. Kalyani Shankar (NEWS X), mentions that he learnt that a massive gathering, from Baramulla, Anantnag, Srinagar and other places, had been planned in a way so that flood of thousands of people assemble at Idgah in Srinagar wherefrom they planned to proceed to forcibly occupy Radio and Srinagar TV Station and thereafter declare the independence of Kashmir. Acknowledging the situation, Mr. Jagmohan arranged deployment of Army throughout the valley on the night of 25 th Jan '90.

Pran Koul says, "A soldier colleague of mine whose unit was deployed in Baramulla, on the fateful night, shared with me that soldiers were deployed all over, inclusive of roads and dense streets. They didn't allow people to come out of their houses in the morning of 26th January' 90. I presume that similar administrative control must have been exercised all over the valley and thus, as in Mr. Jagmohans words, 'Kashmir was saved'."

Coming back to the holocaust, there were hundreds of brutal killings prior to, on and after 19th January' 90. I am citing only a few for the reference of children like you. To start with, they gunned down Sh Tika Lal Taploo, a prominent lawyer and member of J & K Wing of BJP. He was also popular amongst the local Muslims. Prof Bhan writes, "He had always helped and served both Hindus and Muslims of his locality. The Muslims of his locality mourned his death and joined the mammoth funeral procession. His death sent a powerful tremor down the spine of the Kashmiri Hindu community and caused real tangible concern."

And then killings started day after day. It was followed by the killing of Sh.K. N. Ganjoo, a retired Judge; Sh. P. N. Bhat, a famous Advocate from Anantnag; Sh. Lassa Koul, Director Doordarshan Kendra Srinagar; Sh. R.N. Handoo, PA to Governor; Sh. B. K. Ganju, a young budding telecom engineer. It is said that when the young widow of Sh. Ganju appealed to the killers to kill her and the two little baby girls, they said, "Who would then mourn his death?"

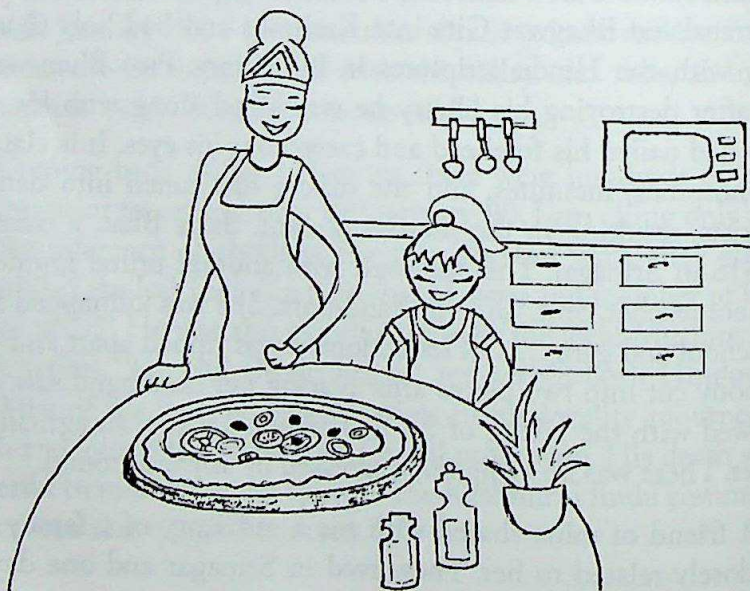
On 20th March 1990, Sh. A.K. Raina (Pran Koul's brother-in-law), a young Chemical Engineer turned civil servant, was killed in his office chamber in Srinagar. He was Deputy Director Food & Civil Supplies (J & K). This followed with the killings of Sh. Nila Kanth Lala, a highly educated person and Prof Kundan Lal Ganju, an agricultural Scientist at Sher Kashmir University of Agricultural Science & Technology located at Wadoora, Sopore. Pran Koul, his neighbor and childhood friend, says that Kundan's wife was kidnapped... and her further whereabouts are not known thereafter.

Then followed the killings of Sh. D. N. Mujoo, in Rawalpura. He was a highly learned and respectable scholar. This was followed by the brutal murder of an eminent Kashmiri poet and scholar who had translated Bhagwat Gita into Kashmiri and had holy Quran along with the Hindu scriptures in his library. Prof Bhan writes that after destroying his library he was killed along with his son. They had nailed his forehead and carved out his eyes. It is claimed that hospitals, institutes, and the offices had turned into dens of terrorists, resulting in the murder of Smt. Sarla Bhat, a nurse in SKIMS in Srinagar. This followed with another brutal murder of a school teacher, Smt. Girja in Bandipora. She was kidnapped from her school and gang..... Her abdomen was ripped apart and then her body cut into two pieces after placing her on a band saw. This followed with the killing of Sh Ballkrishen Tickoo, an agricultural officer. There was no sympathy expressed by anyone around.

A friend of mine shared with me a sad story of a family who are closely related to her. They lived in Srinagar and one day the

demons started creating havoc with the Hindu lady folk in their locality. Under duress, the scared parents of their budding beautiful girl decided to poison her or else... They practically poisoned her and preferred to see her dead before the militants could spread their wild paws on her. As luck would have it, the girl survived the dose of poison. She is now a grown-up lady and by God's grace happily placed.

[Sheen looked at Wuzmel and noticed her swollen eyes and decided to distract her attention from the narration for a while and cleverly proposed a break. She told Wuzmel that she would serve her the pizza which they had got packed at the roadside restaurant. Wuzmel agreed and went with her Mom to the kitchen to enjoy her favourite pizza. Sheen was successful in refreshing Wuzmel... both of them returned to the place of narration...]



Sheen: Wuzmel, how was the pizza?

Wuzmel: Great, my favourite!

Sheen: Shall we start from where we left?

Wuzmel: Yes Ma.

Sheen: Having told you about the militants and the religious fundamentalists, you should know that there were some good people also around but nobody spoke boldly against the militants because of the fear of the gun or everybody tried to play safe.

Prof Bhan writes, "There was in fact, one exception: late Mirwaiz Maulvi Farooq who did not toe the line of the terrorists. He had the temerity to declare that all that was un-Islamic. His voice was a cry in the wilderness and the Mujahids professing to be impassioned followers of Islam too silenced it for its nonconformity..."

Quoting Maulana Wahid-ud-Din Khan, an eminent Islamic scholar and authority on Islamic scripture, "Tolerance is not an act of compulsion. It is a positive principle of life expressing a noble side of a man's character. The existence of tolerant human beings in a society is just like blooming of flowers in a garden. So far as Islam is concerned, it is an entirely tolerant religion. Islam desires peace to prevail in the world. The Quran calls the way of Islam the path of peace, the state of peace can never prevail in a society if a tolerant attitude is lacking in the people."

19 January' 90 was the night when some Muslim and Sikh taxi and truck drivers came to the rescue and transported lakhs and lakhs of Kashmiri Hindus who bid farewell to their motherland, to their hearths and houses, to their fields and gardens. With tears in their eyes, they picked up a few bags and underwent a forced transplantation from the refrigerator to the hot oven. Some little mercies were, however, shown by accommodating them in tents in the company of snakes and scorpions, in absence of civil amenities in Jammu. Thus, they landed as refugees in their own country rather

in their own state. Their houses were looted, and properties burnt and, in many cases, occupied by the locals. All efforts were made to ensure that Hindus didn't dare to return. Unbelievable that even after the Holocaust Night of 19th January 1990 the killings of those Hindus, who were preparing to leave their hearths and homes, were continued unabated. Babli Raina was gang..... in her house in Pran Koul's home town, Sopore, on 13th August 1990, in the presence of her family members and then killed. Smt Asha Koul of Achabal-Anantnag was subjected to inhuman havoc for days together and her body was finally found in a decomposed state on 8th August 1991. Kumari Babli and her mother were brutally killed in Pulwama... The killings, as mentioned above, are some of the crude examples of barbarism and not all - else the narration will run into volumes.

Sheen: Let me educate you my dear Wuzmel that the situation didn't end there. Crowds of protestors turned up at Gawkadal Bridge. Wielding their guns freely, the militants tried to create a situation which went out of control and paramilitary forces opened fire in what is now called 'Gawakadal Massacre'. Jagmohan says that misinformation was propagated deliberately that he had ordered to open fire. This propaganda was echoed from Pakistan repeatedly because ISI was happy that everything was going as per their plan but for Jagmohan who was determined to fail their mischievous attempts. Realising the failure of ISI plan, Benazir Bhutto, the then PM of Pakistan, was taken aback to the extent that she hurried from Islamabad to POK and cried her lungs out labeling Jagmohan as Anti-Muslim. In his interview with Smt Kalyani Shankar, Jagmohan says that Benazir Bhutto didn't attack Indian Prime minister or President of India but chose to corner Governor as anti-Muslim to add fuel to the communal fire which had been lit by them in the valley. Jagmohan was humane and had proved it beyond any doubt during his earlier tenure in J & K with his honesty and administrative skills.

Pran Koul vouches for Jagmohan's humane characteristic, based on his personal experience. He told me that his brother-in-law, Sh.

A. K. Raina, the then Deputy Director Food & Civil Supplies, had been one of his blue-eyed civil services officers mainly because of his sincerity and dedication. Even in those dark days he had ensured smooth supply of essential items not only in Kashmir but also in Ladakh region during the peak winter when the valley was burning. Jagmohan would mostly take him along during his tours. This wasn't to the liking of the militants because they wanted the chain of supply to fail.

When Sh. Raina was shot dead in his office chamber in Srinagar, his mother (Pran Koul's mother-in-law) was in Jammu. Like a mad lady she left for Srinagar by road, in distress and in a pitiable state, because there were no flights due to bad weather. Pran says that when Jagmohan came to know about her departure, he instructed his Director General of Police that IGP Police, located in Srinagar, should receive her when she crosses the tunnel rather on her entry into the valley. It so happened that she couldn't go beyond Ramban on account of severe snow fall and had to return back to Jammu. She was driven to Raj Bhavan (Jammu) to meet Jagmohan. On her entry to Raj Bhavan, Jagmohan walked to her and touched her feet. The forlorn mother requested him to bring her son's dead body to Jammu for the last rites. On hearing the poor lady's request, Jagmohan practically froze and looked towards Ved Marwah, his adviser, who negated probably fearing that it could affect law and order in Jammu. Pran Koul added that thereafter Jagmohan provided immense support to the family till late even after his tenure.

Jagmohan was a man of steel but the then Govt. of India, with V P Singh as PM and the shady Home Minister, were incompetent. They succumbed to the propaganda emanating from Pak which was strengthened and echoed by Kashmiri politicians who had mischievous aims. In consequence Jagmohan was called back and replaced by Girish Saxena. This change of guard was the last nail driven into the coffin and proved highly detrimental to India. For years to come, Sh. V. P. Singh shall always be remembered for this

blunder. The killing of Kashmiri Hindus continued unabated, so did their exodus.

Sheen (*in an extremely choked voice with tears rolling down her cheeks*): Wuzmel, it is very difficult for me to describe further the acts of those barbarians who engineered our genocide. However, let me share what Major General Pran Koul writes in his book, 'The Silence Speaks'. Pick up the book from the bookshelf and pass it on to me.

Sheen (reads out from the book): "The uncared sparks kept swelling to the extent that auspicious religious places became platforms to propagate filthy slogans asking Hindus, clearly and crisply, to exit the valley leaving their women folk behind. In the days and months ahead, many Hindus were killed which was against the ethos of *Kashmiriyat*. When the administration finally woke up, the sparks had turned into a deadly fire and from there on the situation went from bad to worse. Even today the situation continues to burn, sometimes with flames and sometimes without.

Pran Koul continues, "My aim is not to go into the depth of this 'Cancer' because it may involve volumes of work and more importantly is beyond the context of this book. The fact, however, remains that this deadly fire has engulfed and spread its poisonous flames all over the valley and is probably not an easy proposition to handle for, mere cosmetics will not help. When treated at one place the sparks simmer and echo in another. In consequence, the face of our beautiful Kashmir has been splashed with mud all over, to the extent that she today looks frustrated with pain and anguish."

Pran Koul adds, "My family was also a victim of the happenings of the time. My youngest brother, Ravi, who worked in 'Kupwara' was on his way home to Sopore one day and while waiting for the bus decided to purchase a watch, for a friend, from the local Army Canteen. After doing so and while en-route to Sopore the bus was stopped by a contingent of the Paramilitary Force and one of the

passengers, a Muslim, was apprehended under suspicion of being a militant. Following this, all fellow passengers, mostly from the Muslim community, having noticed my brother's visit to the Army canteen before boarding the bus, suspected it of having something to do with the detention, of the fellow passenger. Under the prevailing circumstance one wouldn't blame them for suspecting my brother of being an informer. Within hours word of the incident spread through the neighbouring localities and my relatives, having heard of the same, came and advised my parents, brothers, and others in the family to leave immediately, fearing the worst.

The whole family left hearth and house in utter hurry that night. Most believe that had they not done so, that very night, they would have been brutally killed. My mother did not even inform 'Dedha', our Muslim neighbour, due to the prevailing circumstances. Putting a simple lock on the door they fled in a truck to Jammu. Many days later, another brother of mine had gone back to the house. Understanding 'Dedha's' disappointment he called on her, took her to our house and together they opened the door. Right there noticed a pressure cooker, full of half-cooked rice along with some cooked vegetables, in the vegetable bowls, the Thalīs (plates) lay spread out... ready for dinner to be served. The scene depicted the harshness of that evening when taking note of the seriousness of the situation and the impending danger, my mother decided not to serve dinner to the family, though it was ready, choosing instead to make a heated escape from what now appears to be a rather narrow one. Was the end so near? No one would ever know...

My brother-in-law, Sh. Raina... had been the only such person to be killed in office. They say that the condition of the office furniture testified that he had not been an easy prey. He had given the demons a tough fight until bullets, from the terrorist's gun, silenced him. That was the time when the real exodus of the Hindus started and the rest as they say is history. The situation worsened and thousands of Hindu families fled the Kashmir valley for good... Even today,

whenever I have childhood dreams, I wander through the streets of Sopore only to wake up with an acute hangover. The pangs of separation of my birthplace are so intense in my subconscious mind that I am convinced they must have affected my brain, in some way, slowly but steadily.”

Sheen: Pran Koul once mentioned to me that his three storied parental house, in Sopore, was occupied by two dreaded militant families immediately after his parents departed for Jammu under distress. The house remained under the occupation of the militants for ten long years, and it was only after strong intervention by BSF that these militants vacated the house which ultimately was sold in duress to a local Kashmiri Muslim for peanuts.

Wuzmel: Ma, what a suffering!

Sheen: That isn't all. The killings continued unabated. The militants carried out brutal massacres which sent shock waves all over the world. One massacre, referred to as 'Chittisingpura Massacre,' was carried out by the militants in which 35 villagers of Sikh faith were brutally killed on 20th March 2000 in Chittisingpura village, located in Anantnag district.

In another massacre called 'Nadimarg Massacre', 24 Kashmiri Pandits were massacred which included two children, one less than two years. This massacre took place on 23rd March, 2003 in a village called Nadimarg, located in Pulwama district.

Sheen: At this stage let me quote Prof Bhan, “Mr. Wimmer, a member of the German Parliament and Vice President OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) asserted that they are against ethnic and religious cleansing and the way the Kashmiri Pandits were forced to migrate from Kashmir, the land of their ancestors. New Delhi is yet to adopt tough attitude towards the terrorists and put down its foot to crush militancy with determination and courage. Even when it has a lot of irrefutable and unquestionable evidence and proofs of Pakistani's complicity

and direct and open involvement in the present disturbances in the valley, New Delhi has done nothing appreciable to counter Pakistani propaganda and expose Pakistan and its patronized militant outfits before the world community. How long will she wait? Is there no limit to the patience... ?

Sheen started feeling conscious that innocent questions must be whirling in Wuzmel's mind mainly about the barbarians and the failed administration that together had crossed all limits of inhumanity. She appreciated that the innocent child deserved another break.

Wuzmel: Ma, why didn't the Government take action?

Sheen: That is the most genuine question, dear. I will answer after a short while. If you agree, let us have a break. In the meantime, I will prepare another cup of coffee for myself. Wuzmel, what will you like to have, dear?

Wuzmel: Ma I would like to have chicken corn soup which you have already prepared for me and I saw it in the fridge.

Sheen (affectionately patting wuzmel): Ha, ha! So, you have already seen it, now get up and let us take a break.

[Sheen and Wuzmel return after a well-deserved break with the drinks of their choice in their hands – mother conscious of the fact that the poor child lent her ears to listen to the horrid of 'Exodus' of Kashmiri Hindus which has in no way been less than a 'Genocide'...]

Sheen: I just forgot what you asked me before going for the break?

Wuzmel: Ma, I wanted to know why the Government didn't take any action?



Sheen: It appears as if the administration of the day was sitting with hands tightly closed. Prof Bhan, says that even Dr. Karan Singh former Sadri-Riyasat (the then President of J & K State) and former Union Minister, didn't shy away in expressing his pain, in no uncertain terms, in Jan' 1995 issue of VOM where he mentions, "Many in the capital tend to look upon J & K merely as an interesting problem; tens of thousands are forced to leave their home to live in refugee camps. Crores of rupees worth residential and other property are destroyed. Thousands of widows and orphans are left to face a bleak future. It is now... anybody's impression that New Delhi is least bothered about the safety, self-respect, and property of the Pandits. In its estimation, a handful of outlaws have turned the valley into a veritable inferno. Fear has gripped every heart and home and there is sense of insecurity prevailing all around. Unless the State of India exerts its power and authority and addresses the situation arising out of terrorism with an iron hand, as late Beant Singh, Chief Minister of Punjab did in his state, no solution is foreseeable."

Wuzmel: Ma, it looks as if you are narrating a horror film. What a suffering! Where is the present status of these displaced families?

I bow to all Kashmiri Hindus, including you, for having withstood the trial of hard times with such resilience. Ma, I am proud of you... love you!

Sheen: Majority of Kashmiri Hindus languished in refugee camps spread all over Jammu in most pitiable condition. Hundreds of them died in tents due to the inhuman conditions, due to snake and scorpion bites and least-care-attitude shown by the administration in vogue from time to time. The community is at present scattered all over - some of them have moved to Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and some, under duress, have shifted to various other countries. Many of them who worked hard are doing well despite all the atrocities they faced.

Those kids who survived and underwent the genocide, while in the laps of their parents, have now grown up as adults - I am one of them. They in turn have been blessed with the next generation children - you are one of them.

But, as already mentioned, our parents passed on to us their most important weapon, **'The Weapon of Education'**, which has finally secured our future and enabled us to withstand the tyranny of genocide with resilience. As already said, many such children, like me, who have now turned into adults, are generally doing well wherever they are. May I say, and say with pride, that they are contributing their energies towards the development of our country irrespective of the odds they have been subjected to.

Now it is our duty, both you and me, not to pretend to forget the brutalities that the community has been subjected to. Every adult should educate their next generation about the facts of this genocide so that the future generations never forget or forgive the brutal fundamentalists and Government of the day who stole their childhood and separated them from their sweet 'Mother-Kashmir', the land of our ancestors, the heaven on earth!

Wuzmel: Ma! You have summarised the tragic events in such a way that I felt as if the events were reeling in front of me.

Sheen: Wuzmel, did you get a fair idea about the ‘Exodus of Kashmiri Hindus’?

Wuzmel: Thanks Ma! You told me more than what I expected. I am taken aback to learn about the atrocities committed by the religious fundamentalists. It is necessary to know about such a holocaust which our parents and ancestors have been subjected to.

Sheen: It is also worthwhile to tell you at this stage that a young Kashmiri gentleman, Abir Bazaz, a ‘Fellow from the University of Minnesota’, carried out his extensive research where he primarily looked up for answers to the Hindu-Muslim disharmony which has been engulfing the valley like wildfire for the last three decades. During his research the past didn’t disappoint him. Quoting from ‘The Hindu’ of 5th August 2012, “Pulled by this great past of his people, Abir has been researching the Rishi order and increasingly realizing what were actually the foundations of Kashmir... One of the fundamental concerns of the Order was to avoid violence between the two communities.”

Wuzmel: Thanks for adding the information about ‘Ancient Saints and Rishis and Sufis of Kashmir’. It was very interesting to learn about the communal harmony which many of them preached and practiced. It is high time that such godly people are born again to pick up the broken threads of brotherhood between different communities. The need of the hour is to bring relief to this sick world which is crying out of pain.

Ma! Be assured that I will contact my class teacher tomorrow and volunteer to speak on the subject and shall speak with confidence. To take it forward, it may be worthwhile to pen down a write-up covering the sequence of events narrated by you and contribute it to the school magazine... I love you, Ma! I am a proud of you!

Sheen: Thanks, dear! I feel satisfied that I responded to your innocent queries. Don’t worry... time will come when wisdom shall dawn all over to the extent that the dirty roots of religious

fundamentalism will be wiped out, sooner than later, not only in Kashmir but all over the world.



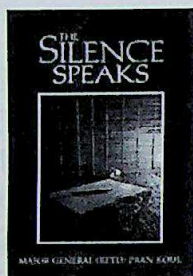
Sheen (adds): My advice to you is to grow up to a good Indian citizen and preserve 'The Weapon of Education' so that it is carried forward to the next generation. Your generation should ensure that the ball is kept rolling.

Jai Mauj Kasheer Jai Bharat

Jai Hind

By the Same Author

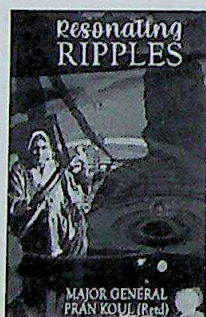
The Silence Speaks (1st Edition-2014, 2nd Edition-2018)



The memoir, within its pages, contains flashback memories which touch upon his journey from the dense streets of Sopore (Kashmir) to the corridors of Defence Headquarters (GHQ), Rawalpindi, Pakistan. The author shares his experiences which he cultivated during his official assignments to various countries and continents including the least known continent of Antarctica.

(1st Edition is available on Amazon & Flipkart and 2nd edition is available online with *Oxford Bookstore*: <https://oxfordbookstore.com/product/the-silence-speaks/>)

Resonating Ripples (2021)



The book starts with a true story which depicts some emotional moments when a search party of security forces launched its mission in a village in Kashmir. The sensitive story is connected by the author beautifully with the boutique of his poems. His close observation of people and places in his hometown in Kashmir or during his wide travels in plains, deserts, high hill mountain ranges including the icy continent of Antarctica and his understanding of what goes in a soldier's heart and mind have contributed substantially to the creation of this book.

(Available on Amazon, Flipkart & Google Books)

G.M. College of Education
Raipur, Pantalah
Jammu.

Acc No.... 5317

Dated... 29/3/2024

Turning Pages came into form in consequence of an accidental bugle which a young lady friend of mine, like a daughter to me, sounded during a casual conversation that primarily dealt with flashback memories which were eye-opening and hard to share. The book within its pages stimulates an interesting conversation, on a sensitive issue, between a young mother of about 35 years and her 12 years young school-going daughter.



Major General Pran Koul, former Additional Surveyor General, is a veteran of the Indian Army. Way back in 1991, during an Indian National Scientific Expedition to Antarctica, he led the Survey Team and surveyed the first Indian map in Antarctica which was filmed in a

national award-winning film *Antarctica: A Scientists Paradise*, produced by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India.

He hails from the dense streets of Sopore (Kashmir). He has been part of some important and often historic missions which include Antarctica, the high hills of the Himalayas, Pakistan, China, the United States of America, Russia and Bhutan.

His books figured in *Times of India*, Jammu based *Daily Excelsior*, the English fortnightly *The Week* and Malayalam *Manorma*.

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